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ESIPUHE JA KIITOKSET

Päädyin tutkimaan rikosuutisointia sattumalta keväällä 2002. Olin jo useamman kuukauden ajan yrittänyt kirjoittaa sosiologian gradua kameravalvonnasta ilman kunnollista tutkimusasetelmaa ja ohjausta. Ahdistus ja turhautuneisuus vaivasivat, eikä kesätöitäkään ollut tiedossa. Tentin jälkeen tapasin Porthanian tupakkapaikalla sattumalta *Sari Kempin*, joka vinkkasi, että *Oikeuspoliittisella tutkimuslaitoksella (Optula)* voisi päästä tutkimaan iltapäivälehtien väkivaltauutisointia. Ei kulunutkaan kuin muutama päivä kun olin jo yliopiston pääkirjastossa selaamassa mikrofilmejä ja koodaamassa otsikoita. Gradu valmistui sutjakkaassa aikataulussa, osana Optulan tutkimusraporttia *Etusivujen väkivalta*, joka ilmestyi syksyllä 2002.

Maisteriksi valmistumisen jälkeen päätin jatkaa rikosuutisoinnin tutkimista, sillä olin huomannut kuinka kiinnostava aihe minulla oli käsissäni. Tutkimusintoani siivitti myös aikaisemman tutkimuksen vähäisyys, mistä osaltaan kertoi *Etusivujen väkivallan* saama laaja mediahuomio. Pian jatko-opinto-oikeuden saamisen jälkeen 2003 jouduin kuitenkin huomaamaan, ettei rahoituksen saaminen väitöskirjalle ollut helppoa. Unelmat tutkijan vapaudesta vaihtuivat tulevaisuusangstiin ja rahapulaan. Onnekseni Optulasta järjestyi erilaisiin tutkimushankkeisiin liittyviä avustajan töitä, jotka turvasivat toimeentulon. Laitoksen tiloista myönnetty työhuone puolestaan mahdollisti pääsyn työyhteisön jäseneksi ja kirjaston käyttömahdollisuuden. Viimeksi mainitut seikat olivat keskeinen edellytys väitöstyön käynnistymiselle.

Väitöskirjaprosessiini liittyneitä tunnelmia vuosina 2003–2005 kiteyttää parhaiten työtietokoneeni kotihakemistosta edelleen löytyvä kansio nimeltä *Apurahahelvetti*. Sinne arkistoitujen tiedostojen mukaan olen hakenut rahoitusta väitöskirjatyölleni yhteensä 32 kertaa, joista myönteiseen rahoituspäätökseen johtaneita hakemuksia on neljä kappaletta. Itseironisesti olen todennut, että Suomesta harmittavasti puuttuu apurahahakemusten tekemisen mahdollistava tukimuoto.

Rahahanat aukesivat vuonna 2005, jolloin minut valittiin kolmen kuukauden tutkijavaihtoon *Keelen yliopiston* kriminologian laitokselle Iso-Britanniaan. Tutkijavaihdolla oli valtava merkitys ennen kaikkea tutkijan itsetunnolle, vaikkakin minuun tekivät vaikutuksen myös kriminologisen opetuksen ja tutkimuksen taso. Ilokseni vaihto-ohjelmasta vastannut professori *Susanne Karstedt* lupautui sittemmin vastaväittäjäkseni. Muutamaa päivää ennen Suomeen palaamista sain myönteisen rahoituspäätöksen, joka mahdollisti tutkimustyön loppuvuodelle 2005. Vuosi 2006 kului jälleen ilman rahoitusta, mutta vihdoin vuodesta 2007 eteenpäin kykenin pitkäjän-

teisempään työskentelyyn. Työn taloudellisesta tukemisesta kiitokset kuuluvat *Nordiska Samarbetsådet för Kriminologi'lle (NSfK)*, EU:n *Marie Curie* tutkijanvaihto-ohjelmalle sekä *Koneen Säätiölle*.

Rahoituksen katkonaisuudella on ollut myös myönteisiä seurauksia työurani kannalta. Mahdollisuuteni tutustua tutkimustyöhön ja tehdä sitä lukuisissa eri hankkeissa ensin tutkimusavustajana ja sittemmin tutkijana Optulassa ovat takuuvarmasti parantaneet väitöskirjatyön lopputuotosta. Kaikesta huolimatta väitöskirjan tekeminen on ollut erittäin ristiriitainen kokemus. Rehellisesti sanottuna myöntävää rahoituspäätöstäkin mieleenpainuvampi kokemus on ollut se hetki, kun aloin todella uskoa siihen, että työ joskus valmistuu! Tämä tapahtui ehkä noin vuonna 2009.

En liioittele lainkaan kun totean, että ilman tutkimusjohtaja *Janne Kivivuorta* koko väitöskirjatutkimusta ei olisi edes olemassa. Janne on alusta asti ollut minulle merkittävä esikuva kriminologina; niin työn ohjaajan, esimiehen kuin kollegankin roolissa. Jannen laaja lukeneisuus ja rautainen ammattitaito ovat olleet aivan keskeisessä asemassa väitöstyön etenemisessä. Myös Jannen joskus jopa pelottavan yliluonnolliselta tuntuva tekstintuottamiskyky ja -tahti ovat vertaansa vailla. Olen ollut todella etuoikeutettu saadessani työskennellä Jannen ohjauksessa. Kiitos!

Toista ohjaajaani, professori *Pekka Sulkusta* haluan kiittää ennen kaikkea hyödyllisten kotitehtävien antamisesta ja vaikeiden kysymysten esittämisestä. Myös Kolme K:ta ovat iskostuneet pysyvästi mieleeni, ja ne ovat koituneet monesti avukseni niin tutkimussuunnitelmien kuin artikkeleidenkin teossa. Pekan vetämä Helsingin yliopiston sosiologian laitoksella kokoontunut *Interventio*-jatkokoulutusseminaari on lisäksi ollut Optulan ohella merkittävä keskustelufoorumi ja viiteryhmä väitöskirjaprojektin aikana.

Kuuteen *Interventio*-vuoteeni mahtuu lukuisa määrä ihmisiä, jotka ansaitsevat kiitokset papereideni lukemisesta, kommentoinnista ja ennen kaikkea henkisestä tuesta. Osaan olen tutustunut lähemmin myös yliopiston ulkopuolella, ja osan kanssa saan toivottavasti jatkossakin tehdä yhteistyötä. Nimeltä haluan kiittää *Tuula Kekkiä*, *Anna Leppoa*, *Antti Maunua*, *Riikka Perälää*, *Jussi Perälää*, *Pauliina Seppälää ja Yaira Obstbaumia*. *Anu Kataiselle* ja *Tuukka Tammelle* kuuluu erityiskiitos käytännön neuvojen jakamisesta väitösprosessin viime metreillä. *Riikka Kotasta* kiitän terävän ja synkän huumorin sävyttämästä ystävyydestä ja hyvästä mausta.

Optulan ylijohtajaa *Tapio-Lappi-Seppälää* kiitän tutkijanurani mahdollistamisesta käytännössä. Tapio on suhtautunut myötämielisesti väitöskirjahankkeeseeni ja tarjonnut työtilan Optulasta sekä lukuisia työmahdollisuuksia eri tutkimushankkeissa. Työn esitarkastajina toimineet *Anne Alvesalo-Kuusi* ja *Hille Koskela* ansaitsevat kiitokset käsikirjoitukselle antamastaan rakentavasta palautteesta.

Optulan väestä olen kiitollisuudenvelassa erityisesti kahdelle henkilölle. *Päivi Honkatukia*, joka työn alkuvuosina toimi myös sen toisena ohjaajana, on lukemattomia kertoja jaksanut epätoivon hetkellä kannustaa työssäni. En ole tähän päivään mennessä tavannut Päivin veroista käsikirjoitusten kommentoijaa! Päivin paneutuminen teksteihin, rohkaiseva asenne ja lukuisien puoltavien lausuntojen kirjoittaminen rahahakemuksia varten on ollut korvaamatonta. Päivi ansaitsee erityismaininnan myös siitä, että lahjoitti apurahatutkijalle farmariautollisen vauvantarvikkeita.

Minulle oli valtava onnenpotku päästä tekemään *Kati Rantalan* kanssa tutkimusta perheen sisäisistä lähestymiskielloista vuonna 2006. Opin kyseisen hankkeen aikana enemmän tutkimuksen teosta kuin koko yliopisto-opintojeni aikana yhteensä. Kati on kytkeytynyt elämääni ja väitöskirjaprojektiini myös muilla tavoin, muun muassa entisenä *Intervention* jäsenenä. Osastosihteeri *Sirpa Turusta* kiitän lukuisista mukavista keskusteluista, jotka eivät ole liittyneet millään tavalla työntekoon tai tutkimukseen. Tutkimuksen taitosta ja ulkoasusta kiitokset kuuluvat osastosihteeri *Eira Mykkäselle*. Lopuksi haluan kiittää mahtavia sosiologiystäviäni *Elina Ahtia* ja *Anni Ojajärveä* paitsi käsikirjoitukseni kommentoinnista, myös inspiroivista keskusteluista vuosien varrella. Nämä keskustelut alkoivat vuonna 1998 valmennuskursseilla eikä loppua ole näkyvissä.

Olen aina vannonut, etten tässä yhteydessä kiitä rakasta aviomiestäni *Herkko Niemistä* mistään. Pysyn päätöksessäni. Ihanaa tytärtäni *Halla Niemistä* sen sijaan kiitän hyvistä unenlahjoista ja perustyytyväisestä luonteesta. Ne ovat auttaneet minua huomattavasti väitöskirjatyön viime metreillä ja koituvat varmasti jatkossa eduksi myös hänelle itselleen.

Helsingin Kalliossa, 12. päivänä elokuuta 2011

Mirka Smolej

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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

I Smolej, Mirka and Kivivuori, Janne (2008). Crime News Trends in Finland: A Review of Recent Research. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention* 9(2): 202–19.

II Smolej, Mirka and Kivivuori, Janne (2006). The Relation between Crime News and Fear of Violence. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention* 7(2): 211–27.

III Salmi, Venla, Smolej, Mirka and Kivivuori, Janne (2007). Crime Victimization, Exposure to Crime News and Social Trust Among Adolescents. *Young* 15(3): 255–72.

IV Smolej, Mirka (2011). Violence in Crime-Appeal Programming and in Crime Statistics. A Content Analysis of Finnish Poliisi-TV. *Nordicom Review* 32(1): 59–73.

V Smolej, Mirka (2010). Constructing Ideal Victims? Violence Narratives in Finnish Crime-Appeal Programming. *Crime, Media, Culture* 6(1): 69–85.

1 INTRODUCTION

During the years 1988 to 1997 surveys in Finland showed a significant rise in the levels of fear of crime. For criminologists this finding was of particular interest, since at the same time levels of violent victimization remained stable. It appeared likely that some factor other than a change in criminal behaviour had affected the levels of fear. These observations triggered a series of studies within the social science research community.

In explaining this paradox, numerous societal factors should be taken into account. Some of them can be roughly classified in terms of their temporal duration. The potential long-term factors that could explain an increase in fear of crime include urbanization and changes in demography. Since the 1950s urbanization has rapidly increased the number of people living in comparatively anonymous circumstances within the saturated mass society. At the same time, the demographic structure has altered as the number of elderly persons continues to rise. Yet, while important and relevant, these factors are largely unable to explain the relatively drastic changes in fear of crime levels after 1988. Researchers therefore began to look for short-term factors.

Since the late 1980s, Finnish society itself has gone through drastic changes. A deep economic recession that took place in the first half of the 1990s resulted in mass unemployment. The economic depression altered the public mood, from optimism to pessimism. The depression was quickly followed by an economic boom from 1994, which revived the strongly optimistic atmosphere (Blom, 1999: 88–94). At the same time the country witnessed substantial cultural and ethnic pluralisation. Along with the membership in the European Union, which Finland joined in 1995, the country's borders opened up more, especially to the West. The crisis of the welfare state, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and international terrorist attacks all have been charged with paving the way for the Finnish 'culture of fear' (Koskela, 2009: 67). In short, the decade of the 1990s can be described as an era of huge social, economic and political change that was reflected in the nation's climate of opinion.

The rise in the fear of crime also inspired criminologists to ask about the role of the media in this changed climate. While there were plentiful

data on the relevant social factors mentioned above, there appeared to be a distinct scarcity of information about crime and the news media. In effect, in Finland during the 1990s research on crime contents and trends in the media was non-existent. At the dawn of the twenty-first century the situation changed rapidly as researchers became increasingly interested in the role of the media in fear-related matters. Within the field of criminology, the surge of new research interest was launched in 2002 by a study on the front pages of tabloids, which showed a drastic increase in reporting on violence (Kivivuori et al., 2002). Subsequently, other studies corroborated the basic finding in other media sectors (Kemppi and Kivivuori, 2004; Syrjälä, 2007; Mäkipää and Mörä, 2009). Indeed, the various societal changes during the 1990s coincided with changes in the media environment in general and perhaps particularly in the media's reporting of crime. Thus, fear of crime and news media's reporting of crime became areas of research interest for Finnish social scientists.

The starting point for this dissertation can be traced to a classic criminological paradigm (Ditton et al., 2004), based on the observation that crime and violence comprise a large percentage of newspaper, television and radio news. As these contents appear to be sensational rather than mundane, it has become commonplace to claim that since so few people are victims of crime, the high levels of fear of crime turned up by the surveys are related to media consumption. The present research explores the contemporary relevance and accuracy of this criminological claim in Finland, using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

This article summarises the empirical findings of five sub-studies that explored the relationship between news reporting of crimes and the fear of violence and the crime news contents of Finnish reality-crime programming. The individual sub-studies are not only closely related in terms of research goals and questions, but also each of them reflects the wider social and cultural transformations of Finnish society, which occurred in the course of the 1990s. Apart from describing the findings of the primary studies, this summary shows how and why fear of crime became institutionalized in the public discourse and in social science research and how the expanding reporting of crime news was connected with these processes.

The causal relationships between the media and the fear of crime are difficult to establish. The composition of this dissertation reflects this complexity: in the following sections I will analyse various explanations and implications for both the rising levels of fear of crime and the expanding reporting on crime in the media. Rather than trying to verify which came first, the chicken or the egg, this study emphasizes the interactional nature of the various phenomena that fostered the rise in both trends.

The objectives of the introductory section is to contextualize the study, first by describing the Finnish discourse on fear of crime in the 1990s and then by presenting an overview of the key changes that were then occurring in the Finnish media reporting of crime. I will introduce a series of factors that contributed to this massive rise in crime reporting. The section concludes by exploring the new victim-centred discourse which has recently permeated our contemporary societies. Finally, I will show how this discourse is connected with the relationship between fear and reporting on crimes.

The second section describes the data and methods used in the primary research articles, while the third section describes the research field of crime and the media. While the topic is of interest to various disciplines, my main focus is on the criminological approach. The fourth section describes the empirical results of the sub-studies and explores the media-fear relationship in light of the most recent trends. In the fifth and final section I draw conclusions of the findings and present future prospects for research into crime reporting in the media.

1.1 Tracing fear of crime

Human life has always included elements of risk, but contemporary risks are significantly different than they were in the industrial societies of the nineteenth century. The *Risk Society* thesis (Beck, 1993) suggests that the transition from modernity to late- or post-modernity has been characterized by a shift away from a focus on economic inequality and towards the control of risk. Whereas modernity was characterized by the positive problem of acquiring ‘goods’ (e.g. income or health), the risk society is characterized by the negative problem of avoiding ‘bads’ (e.g. global warming or pollution) (see also Greer, 2009: 324).

The perception of danger is constantly changing and several phenomena that are considered risky today have not always been considered dangerous. The changes in defining threats have also led to seeing and defining some things as being risky that previously were considered just bad luck. (Furedi, 1998: 3–8). The things we define as risks, such as criminal victimization, often have very little to do with the actual likelihood of risk. Thus, the divergence between subjective perception and the actuality of danger constitutes one of the main subjects of discussion among specialists in the field of risk. In criminology the ‘fear paradox’ (Lee, 2007: 3) refers to the empirical observations that those least at risk for criminal victimiza-

tion (e.g. old women) are the most fearful, while people who statistically have a greater risk of ending up as crime victims (e.g. young men) are less fearful or not fearful at all. In light of such findings there has been ongoing debate as to whether the fear of crime is rational or irrational.

The central reason for contemporary risk consciousness is related to the changing relationship between the individual and society (Furedi, 1998: 66–7). The changing economic conditions in Western societies have created an insecure labour market, while the transformation of service provision has increasingly shifted responsibility from the state to the individual (see also, Sulkunen and Rantala, 2007). Economic change has been paralleled by the transformation of institutions and relationships throughout society. The decline of participation in political parties and trade unions points to the erosion of traditional forms of solidarity among people (Putnam, 1995). In addition, all Western countries have witnessed the trend in recent decades of declining voter turnout and decreasing traditional civic participation (Dean, 1999).

Fear of crime as a social problem in Finland

The first examinations of fear of crime in the Nordic countries were made in the 1970s. Since then the research interest in this topic has increased in intensity. In Sweden, fear of crime became institutionalized as a topic in public discussions in the 1990s, although the first surveys to include fear of crime questions were carried out as early as 1978. Anita Heber (2007: 43) describes how questions about safety and fear of crime became central in political debates in the 1990s. Thereafter, the topic gained more and more attention in Swedish debates and in the construction of criminal policy.

Before the 1990s fear of crime was still a foreign term in Finland, and research on fear was practically non-existent. Moreover, it appeared that safety and security in general did not play very important roles in people's lives. (Koskela, 2009: 65.) The first quantitative explorations of fear of violence were made in the 1988 National Crime Victimization Survey, and the first qualitative explorations of fear of violence in Finland were published in the beginning of the 1990s (for example, Karisto and Tuominen, 1993). Since then, the amount of research on fear of crime and violence has increased in Finland, although the topic has not played as dominant a role in the social sciences as it has in the UK, for example (Walklate, 2007: 57–81; Lee, 2009; Jackson, 2004). However, several institutes have shown research interest related to the topic of fear. As Koskela (2009: 66) observes, Statistics Finland, the National Research Institute of Legal Policy,

The Finnish Police, the City of Helsinki and the Ministry of the Interior have all examined fear of crime. In addition numerous municipal surveys are being conducted.

According to Koskela (2009: 67) Finnish violence has traditionally been seen as something that centres mainly on families and marginalized alcoholic groups. Thus, there has not been much discussion of general street safety, since the perpetrator of violence has usually been familiar to the victim rather than a stranger. Still, although the general image of violence has not changed in recent decades, the experience of street safety has. This is because of a change in attitudes which, in Koskela's words, signify an 'end of the era of innocence'. This transformation slowly enabled the birth of the Finnish 'culture of fear', a culture that constantly highlights the role of insecurities and safety (ibid.: 68).

In most surveys fear of crime is measured by examining the degree of worry about becoming a victim of different types of crimes (on the development of victimization surveys, see Jackson, 2004). In these studies it has been noted that feelings of fear are unequally distributed. For example Finnish respondents over 55 years of age express high levels of fear for walking alone in their neighbourhood at night (Niemi, 2000: 139), although their risk of being victimized is relatively low. In addition, women are more fearful of being victims of street violence than are men, although according to statistics it is particularly young men who often are the victims. This 'fear-paradox' (Lee, 2009) has been widely noted by surveys conducted in various countries (van Kesteren et al., 2000).

Although fear of crime increased drastically in Finland between 1988 and 1997, in an international comparison fear of crime levels are low, both in Finland and in all of the Nordic countries (Alvazzi del Frate and van Kesteren, 2004; European Opinion Research Group, 2003). This has been also borne out the International Crime Victims Survey (Mayhew and van Dijk, 1997), the European Social Survey and the Eurobarometer. Thus, on a global scale Finland is considered an unfearful country. It appears that the welfare state regimes in various European countries at least partly explain the variance of fear of crime on national levels (Hummelsheim et al., 2010). Yet, because of the drastic change in fear trends, fear became a relevant research topic for Finnish social scientists as it remains still.

Risk society and the mass media

In recent years as theories drawn from Ulrich Beck's (1993) ideas of the risk society have been developed by various scholars the concept of 'risk' has become established in sociological and criminological literature. These theories include discussions of a growing 'culture of fear' (Glassner, 1999; Furedi, 1998; Koskela, 2009), a 'culture of control' (Garland, 2001), a shift to an 'exclusive society' (Young, 1999) and to a 'fortress society' (Warr, 2000: 461).

Although they rarely concentrate on the media's role in generating or sustaining the risk society, sociological discussions on risk and fear tend to share the underlying notion that the ever-expanding and more violent reporting of crime in the media creates and enhances negative emotions in individuals (e.g. fear, anxiety) and inflicts unwanted social changes. This development is believed to lead to what George Gerbner (1998) has called 'mean world syndrome' and Lianos and Douglas (2000: 110) describe as 'dangerization'. Both concepts refer to a tendency to perceive the world through categories of menace which is ultimatelly believed to lead to the dominance of fear and anxiety in society. None of the theories and concepts mentioned above claim that the mass media are the only contributors to fear and distrust in contemporary societies, although some studies (see for example, Glassner, 1999; Altheide, 2002) highlight the media's role.

David Altheide (2002) claims that in the United States the mass media and the popular culture entertainment formats have contributed to changing social expectations and people's daily routines by promoting entertainment and fear through a specific problem frame. This problem frame emphasizes a discourse of fear that may be defined as the pervasive communication, symbolic awareness and expectation that danger and risk are central features of the environment. As a result fear has become a part of the public discourse and a perspective from which to view social experience. News about crime influences our perceptions of fear more generally because the same process and format are used over and over again. Altheide's major point, however, is that it is not just the media that have created fear, but also that the discourse of fear has changed over the last few decades, primarily through the activities of the mass media and popular culture, and that this culture has pervaded every institutional arrangement in social life today (ibid.: 177). He argues that the mass media and popular culture are not the only contributors to fear, but they are the most important.

Similar points have been raised by other scholars as well (Garland, 2001; Lee, 2007; Jewkes, 2004; Surette, 1998). For example, Garland (2001: 146; 158) points out that it is clear that the media are important de-

finers of popular knowledge about crime, and this situation results in misinformation. It is also true that public attitudes about crime and punishment are conditioned by information and may sometimes be changed through educational means. Still, Garland suggests that it is a mistake to claim that the media have produced the popular attitude to punitiveness, since crime news and drama would not attract such large audiences or sell so much advertising space without a grounded, routine, collective experience of crime.

Garland's argument (ibid.: 158) is shared by Lee (2007: 190) who claims that the media have merely tapped into, dramatized and reinforced a public experience. In so doing the media have institutionalized that experience and provided people with everyday occasions in which to play out the emotions of fear, anger, resentment and fascination which the human experience of crime generates. According to Lee, although the media both feed off and feed a broader fear of crime discourse, they are not the origin of fear of crime.

Judicialization and sensitization

The term 'judicialization' refers to the growing trend in modern societies to seek legal means to settle conflicts and disputes that previously were handled unofficially or not at all (Kivivuori, 2006: 158). For example, as recently as in the 1970s and 1980s, vandalizing school property merely led to calling the cleaning lady or the janitor. Later on, a similar incident resulted in a talking-to between the student who was responsible for the vandalization and the teacher. Yet currently such incidents are handled in a far more official manner involving parents, the headmaster and even the police. (Koskela, 2009: 164.)

It has been argued that judicialization is reflected in the increase in alternative dispute resolutions as well as in the privatization of justice. These two changes have been distinctive in Finnish law during the twenty-first century (Ervasti, 2005: 368). In addition, judicialization refers to the constantly increasing numbers of laws, bills and regulations. For example, during the last thirty years the number of proposals made by the Finnish Government has remained the same, but the proposals have expanded noticeably in terms of the number of bills, paragraphs and pages per proposal (Pakarinen et al., 2010). The increase in judicialization has been explained by the more general societal changes such as de-traditionalization and cultural pluralism. Since generally-shared moral codes no longer define the correct modes of conduct, law and justice are seen to fill the moral void. In the absence of social control, the power of official control strengthens.

(Wilhelmsson, 2002.) Thus, the paradox of ever-expanding judicialization is that in order to get rid of the flood of regulations, we need to develop new regulations (Wiberg, 2010: 183).

Judicialization has contributed to the concept of sensitization. According to von Hofer (2000), sensitization ultimately reflects the increasing human control over the natural environment, which has decreased levels of tolerance of unexpected disruptions. Since the welfare society has minimized wide-ranging scarcity and suffering and advances in medicine have conquered previously lethal diseases, objectively speaking, daily life has become more secure. Paradoxically, at the same time subjective insecurity has increased. The sensitization to various hardships and discomforts has provided fertile soil in which violence can assume an increasingly prominent position as a social problem, despite the fact that expressions of violence were much more common during earlier periods of history.

An indicator of the judicialization and sensitization developments is human beings' growing propensity to report crimes to the police, a trend witnessed in Finland in recent decades. This has been apparent in violence (Aromaa and Heiskanen, 2000: 128), property crime (Heiskanen et al., 2001: 15) and damage to property cases (Kivivuori, 2006). Similar findings have been reported in Sweden (Estrada, 1999). It appears that people no longer tolerate crimes to the same extent as before and are more willing to make their victimization experiences official and public.

In an individualized society crime is interpreted more as an individual's action against other individuals, and not as an act of hostility against society and its norms (Demker et al., 2010: 327). Following Jock Young's ideas (1999: 68) both sensitization and judicialization can be connected with the general rise in living standards and the efforts to control one's personal environment. Expectations in standards of living have increased, which in turn have led to demands to add resources for security institutions. In Finland the public also appears to have an insatiable demand for an increasing number of police officers (Korander, 2001: 75).

1.2 Changes in crime reporting in the media

In this section I will further contextualize the media-fear relationship by discussing the drastic increase in crime reporting in Finland during the 1990s. My main argument is that the professionalization of crime journalism, the liberation of the Finnish media market, the Internet and the changes in official communication strategies were all linked and enabled

the expansion of crime-related media contents during the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Professionalization of crime journalism

The previously small group of professional crime journalists played a significant role in the Finnish media during the 1990s. The first step towards a professional organization for crime journalists was taken in 1988 with the founding of an association for Finnish crime and court journalists (Oikeustoimittajat ry). During the course of the 1990s separate crime news desks were set up within the largest broadsheet newspapers and the major television channels. For example, the news staff of YLE (the Finnish Broadcasting Company) went through a major reorganization, which culminated in the creation of positions dedicated specifically to crime reporting (Kemppi and Kivivuori, 2004: 20). MTV3, a commercial television channel in Finland, set up a crime news desk in the 1990s (Markkola, 2009). Such measures increased the space dedicated to crime news in the mass media. Currently, all large print and electronic media have their own crime reporters.

In an international context the development of professionalization in crime news is interesting, since according to Reiner (2007: 327), trends in the UK have been different. Reiner states that the production of crime news has been transformed in the UK by a decrease in the use of specialist reporters, including crime correspondents. The explanation for this development is the growing emphasis on celebrities and the increasingly commercial orientation of the multimedia conglomerates that own most of the news outlets. According to Reiner (ibid.) these developments have led to drastic decreases in editorial budgets.

Commercialism has long been seen as a problem for journalism, in Finland as elsewhere. For example, Juha Herkman (2005: 301–8) has claimed that reporters today are more often providers of content than journalists, while commercial interests are guiding journalistic conventions. This is seen in the strong emphasis on celebrities, entertainment, crimes and scandals in the general news content. Thus, it appears that both of these changes – commercialism and professionalism – have taken place at the same time in the Finnish media market.

Reorganization of the media market and the shift to the age of the Internet

Media representatives are known to argue that the most obvious reason for the increase in crime news (and in the number of crime reporters) has been the increase in the actual levels of crime. When researchers counter this notion by pointing out that such changes are non-existent, the argument is usually modified to emphasize the *qualitative changes* in criminality. Usually, this claim refers to 'organized crime' or 'motorcycle club violence', two phenomena that became apparent in Finland in the 1990s. Sure enough, these new types of criminality probably did increase the reporting of crimes. However, as research has shown (Kivivuori et al., 2002), the increase in Finnish reporting of violence in the tabloids was a broader phenomenon, with reporting of all kinds of violence simultaneously on the increase. Thus, a more likely explanation for the rise in crime news is that the liberation of the capital market which took place when Finland became a member of the EU, also occurred within the media market (Aslama and Kivikuru, 2002: 43).

In the 1990s the Finnish television broadcasting sector was reorganized. In connection with this process the ownership of commercial media products changed drastically. These changes ended a long period of stability for two major broadcasters: the state-owned broadcasting company *Yleisradio* (YLE) and the private broadcaster *Mainos-TV*. The television channel reform of 1993 enabled wider competition, which culminated with the merge of a nationwide television channel (*MTV Oy*) and a notable newspaper corporation (*Aamulehti*-yhtymä). These changes fuelled further reorganization of media ownership, which came to a head in 1997–1998 in the unforeseen competition between two huge media conglomerates forcing the state-owned broadcasting company YLE to adopt a similar competitive logic for its operations. (Herkman, 2005: 59–61.)

Meanwhile, the Internet was facilitating the mass production of short (crime) news clips. As crime is one of the most prevalent topics in the news media (Surette, 1998; Reiner, 2007), newspapers and television quickly became interested in the possibilities of expanding their production of crime news. At the same time two free newspapers, *Metro* and *Uutislehti 100* were introduced in Finland, further intensifying the news competition. The Internet also enabled a key element of crime news – the visual dimension – to be emphasized in a totally different way than before. All of this heightened the competition between the electronic and the print media, a battle that is still going on today.

New official communication strategies

During the 1990s crime reporters established close ties with the sources of crime information, and the growing demand for crime news was met by increasingly active news feed from the police (Kemppi and Kivivuori, 2004: 20). As Jarkko Sipilä, the chairman of the Finnish Crime and Justice Reporters Association, put it (Markkola, 2009), whereas before each medium had to contact the police separately and beg for news material, today anyone can order an e-mail news brief from a police department. The courts have also increased the information flow to the media by introducing new information strategies and plans (Oikeusministeriön viestintäsuunnitelma, 2007). This is currently seen in the frequency of news reports on civil and criminal court proceedings.

All of the above-presented changes – professionalization, reorganization of the media market and increased official newsfeeds influenced the rapid growth, not only of crime news reporting, but also of public discussions about the potentially harmful effects of crime in the media, particularly in the tabloids. In the spring of 2006, the Finnish ombudsman for children raised the question of the fear-evoking tabloid front pages and advertisements[1]. The ombudsman's initiative had been motivated by complaints from parents about the brutality of the tabloids. The project called 'tabloid-free checkouts' gained a lot of attention in public discussions, while in response the media raised questions of freedom of speech (see Article I for more information). These discussions coincided with the growth of academic research on crime news in the Finnish tabloids (Kivivuori et al., 2002; Syrjälä, 2007; Kivioja, 2004; 2008; Mäkipää and Mörä, 2009).

1.3 Emergence of the victim

Furedi (1998: 8) claims that in a society where risks and threats are constantly present, it is more valued to survive than actually to try and change the circumstances. Increasingly, our uncertain society has adapted to the standards of its most fragile members. The outcome of this process is 'the culture of victimhood', which can be summarized as follows: since everyone is at risk, everyone is a victim. This new victim-centred discourse,

[1] The advertisement sheets of the tabloids are posted in all grocery store and kiosk checkout counters and are thus highly visible.

which I call ‘the emergence of the victim’, can be seen in several areas of our contemporary societies.

Pekka Sulkunen (2009: 142–54) links the growing focus on the victim’s point of view to the general transformation of power relations in contemporary welfare states. Since in contemporary societies power builds on the emphasis on individual autonomy the state intervenes in individual lifestyles only when such circumstances have adverse consequences on other people. In a similar manner, the criminologist Felipe Estrada (2004: 420) has claimed that the protection of the public has become a guiding principle in Sweden, where the contemporary objective is to minimize the risks and increase the level of safety. These tendencies underline the notion that first and foremost it is the vulnerable and the innocent – the victim – that must be protected (see also Leppo, forthcoming).

According to David Garland (2001), the re-emphasis on the victim is associated with the new punitive penal policy that is replacing what he calls ‘penal welfarism’, by which he is referring to the welfare state’s emphasis on rehabilitation and therapy instead of on punishment. While the US and the UK are the heartlands of the ‘punitive turn’, the overall trend, or tendency, is more widespread (see Pratt et al., 2005), and it has shifted the focus from the causes of crime to its consequences. Garland (2001) observes that late modern societies are obsessed with criminal policies that centre on security, repression and control. However, while at times there have been a few signs of the ‘new punitiveness’ in the Nordic countries (see, for example, Bondeson, 2005; Balvig, 2005), overall it can be said that none of the Nordic countries has followed the path predicted by Garland (Warner, 2009). Neither can the concept of the punitive turn be used to describe the legislative activity intended to improve the position of the crime victim in the Nordic countries.[2]

Victim protection as social policy

Despite the restrictions on applying Garland’s concepts (2001) of the ‘punitive turn’ directly to Finland, the emergence of the victim does appear to be an observable phenomenon in the Nordic countries. For example, during

[2] For instance, Finland’s C*rime Damages Compensation Law* of 1974 was a part of sweeping reforms aimed at reducing the punitivity of the criminal justice system (see Lappi-Seppälä, 2000: 475–80). Since then, there has been a steady flow of extensions and reforms improving the position of the victim. The overall trend in these amendments has been to make eligibility for compensation more inclusive in terms of victim groups and in types of damage. These reforms were originally part of the construction of the Nordic welfare states.

the last 15 years in Sweden, the number of parliamentary debates on crime victims has increased significantly. In addition, since the term 'crime victim' first appeared in public debates in 1970, Sweden's political parties have become increasingly concerned with victims. (Demker et al., 2010: 328.)

Concrete examples of the emergence of the victim can also be seen in numerous recent legislative reforms, which first and foremost are aimed at compensating, empowering and protecting the victim (Braithwaite, 2002: 10) and enabling a victim-offender dialogue. Several of these legislative reforms fall within the realm of restorative justice, although in Finland the ideological basis for mediation lies more in the efforts to rehabilitate the offender than in empowering the victim (Järvinen, 1993: 51). A classic example of the application of restorative justice within criminal justice is the wide-spread procedure of offender-victim mediation, whereby victims have an opportunity to articulate the full impact of the crime upon their lives, receive answers to any lingering questions about the incident, and participate in holding the offender accountable for his or her actions.

In Finland recent examples of such interventions include domestic barring orders (Rantala et al., 2008) and victim-offender mediation (Flinck and Iivari, 2004). In the first of these a restraining order can be issued whenever the parties involved live in the same household. In mediation, a neutral third party facilitates a dialogue between the victim and the offender, who discuss how the crime affected each of them, share information and develop a restitution agreement and a follow-up plan (McCold, 2006: 24).

Media portrayals

The development whereby attention is shifted more and more to the victim is also evident also in media portrayals. For example, crime reporting in Finnish tabloids increasingly concentrates on conveying the subjective experiences of the crime victim and eyewitnesses, instead of portraying the perpetrator (Mäkipää and Mörä, 2009). In addition, the consequences of violence, such as grief and shock, are stressed to a much greater degree than before (Syrjälä, 2007; see also Hooman, 2009).[3]

[3] Media columnists and some researchers have also claimed the opposite. Especially after the school shootings in Jokela 2007 and Kauhajoki 2008 and more recently after the massacre in Norway in summer 2011 the media has been accused of devoting too much space and attention to the perpetrators. By doing so the media is seen to glorify the killers and to neglect and diminish the sufferings of the victims.

Mervi Pantti (2005) has observed that the Finnish media appear to be expressing growing interest in emotion by devoting more and more space to representations of mourning in covering major disasters or shocking deaths. In fact, during the last fifty years media reporting on national tragedies has constructed and enhanced specific mourning rituals in Finnish society (Pantti and Sumiala, 2009). Recently, it appears that the tabloids are both enhancing and prolonging the reports on celebrity deaths. This is seen, for example, in the expansion of special pull-outs dedicated to the deceased and in funeral reports. Similar developments have occurred in other countries as well (Pollack, 2001: 264; Greer, 2009). Crime victims are now discussed in terms of personal stories and experiences (Demker et al., 2010: 328). By eliciting tears, joy and vicarious emotional experience, the media representations of victims are believed to be entertaining, which is one reason they dominate the crime news.

Victim as status

A victim is not merely someone who has suffered as a result of some personal, social or physical calamity (Altheide, 2002: 180), but in the postmodern age, being a victim also confers status. Moreover, the crime victim is not merely a rhetorical or policy device, but a claim to citizenship. As Sandra Walklate (2007: 23) has articulated the position: 'I am a victim, therefore I am.'

In the UK since the 1980s the impact of the feminist movement on victim-oriented studies, policies and the transformation of the role of the crime victim has been profound (ibid.: 14–5). The feminist movement has also enormously influenced both research on Finnish violence and Finnish criminal policies from the 1990s (Rantala et al., 2008: 4–7). Undoubtedly, the strength of the feminist movement has set the scene for the mushrooming number of victim support groups and networks that have flourished in recent years.

A simple Google search conducted in July 2011 resulted in the following victim associations in Finland: Huoma (Association for Homicide Victim's Families and Friends), RIKU (Victim Support Finland), Suomen nuoret lesket ry (Finland's Young Widows), Uskontojen uhrien tuki UUT ry (Support Group for the Victims of Religions), and Narsistien Uhrien Tuki ry (Support Group for Victims of People Having Narcissistic Personality Disorder). These organizations are all not connected with criminal victimization, but they have expanded the meaning of the word to include a huge variety of groups and people. Doubtless, there are many similar associa-

tions, which just do not include the word ‘victim’ in their name, yet they sustain the same victim discourse.

The activities of victimhood movements are likely to be connected with the rising risk-consciousness and with the general sensitization of the public with regard to crime. Just as reporting crimes to the police seems to be on the increase, so too do public and semi-public manifestations of personal victimhood. Whether this is done through tabloid journalism or by organising a victim-support group, the message is clear: these days it is acceptable – even normal – to be a victim.

Victim as consumer

Currently, there is an enormous amount of security applications and gadgets, which are marketed by the expanding security industry. Koskela (2009: 321–5) provides examples of the products and services that target the most likely risk-bound victims of our society: children and the elderly. Products introduced as ‘telecare technologies’ include devices such as electronic security bracelets, infant safety car seats, baby alarms and monitors and even baby-safe feeders.

These products and the expanding private security sector are not merely manifestations of social control (ibid.: 325); they have also accentuated the role of the crime victim as a consumer in an unforeseen manner. Thus, these developments are tangible examples of the emergence of the victim.

It is debatable whether the expansion of various security applications (e.g. biking helmets, baby-safe feeders, surveillance cameras) is a result of the growing fear among the public (ibid.: 315). It is possible that the enormous success of the safety industry is fuelled more by sensitization, consumerism and rapid developments in the engineering sciences. Rather than buying our way out of fear, we are first and foremost purchasing easy living. Since fear is normalized in our contemporary society, it is completely acceptable – even rational – to purchase security devices and services.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research questions and an overview of the sub-studies

This dissertation examines the reporting of crime news in the Finnish media and its association with fear of violence and social trust. In order to explore these relationships, large scale quantitative survey databases as well as qualitative media texts have been analysed. The main research questions are as follows:

1. Has the reporting of crimes in the media in Finland increased since the 1980s?
2. Is there an association between exposure to news about crime and fear of violence (as measured by worry and avoidance behaviour)?
3. Is exposure to news about crime linked to social trust among adolescents?
4. What kinds of images of violence and victims of violence are generated by the Finnish crime-appeal programme *Poliisi-TV*?[4]
5. Who are the typical victims and what emotional techniques are utilised to describe those victims on *Poliisi-TV*?

This dissertation consists of five sub-studies that correspond roughly to the research questions presented above. The sub-studies are schematically and concisely described in Table 1, which shows the different data-sets and data types that have been used.

[4] In this dissertation, I follow Kafatou-Haeusemann's (2007: 85) definitions of reality-crime programming. This TV genre consists of two separate formats: reality-based police shows and crime-appeal programmes. The former presents and justifies the police as the authoritarian agent of crime control, whereas the latter serves the heroic space for ordinary citizens (see also, Article IV).

Table 1 The dissertation's sub-studies

Sub-study	Topic	Data type	Data source	N of analytical units	Respondent age	Type of analysis
I Crime News Trends in Finland: A Review of Recent Research	Trends in reporting crime	Prior studies	Review of selected Finnish media and survey data	Multiple	Multiple	Review
II The Relation between Crime News and Fear of Violence	The relationship between crime news consumption, fear of violence and social trust	Survey	National Crime Victimization Survey 2003 (NCVS)	8,614	15–74	Logistic regression
III Crime victimization, Exposure to Crime News and Social Trust Among Adolescents	The association between exposure to crime news and social trust	Survey	Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study 2004 (FSRD)	5,000	15–16	Logistic regression
IV Violence in Crime Appeal Programming and in Crime Statistics. A Content Analysis of Finnish Poliisi-TV	Content of crime representation as compared with crime	Media content	*Poliisi-TV*, crime statistics 2008, National Crime Victimization Survey 2006 (NCVS)	*Poliisi-TV*: 23 programme episodes (148 news vignettes), NCVS: 7,715	NA	Content analysis
V Constructing Ideal Victims? Violence Narratives in Finnish Crime-Appeal Programming.	Images of violence and victim narratives	Media content	*Poliisi-TV*	21 violence vignettes identifying victims of violence	NA	Narrative analysis

NA = not applicable.

The first sub-study is a review of crime reporting trends in Finland. In this study I reviewed prior research and used existing Finnish datasets on media contents and on exposure to news about crime. The objects of my analyses have been crime reporting in the tabloids, on television news and in local newspapers. The survey data were comprised of the Mare Balticum Youth Victimization Survey 2002–2003, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) 2003 and the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study (FSRD) 2004.

The second sub-study, based on a nationally representative survey, examines the association between the consumption on crime reporting in the media and fear of violence when personal and vicarious victimization experiences (and other standard variables such as age and socio-economic status) are held constant. The third sub-study presents an analysis of the impact of crime news consumption on fear as well as an analysis of the media effects on general social trust. In sub-studies I—III, the term 'fear of violence' refers to the quantitative measurements made in the surveys. The concept 'fear' includes expressed feelings of insecurities and worries, while 'violence' refers to crimes of violence. Thus, by 'fear of violence', this research refers to expressed worries and anxieties of becoming a victim of violent crime. Similarly, the concept of social trust is operationally defined as a term measured by four survey items (see below).

For the fourth sub-study I analysed the contents of the Finnish television crime-appeal programme *Poliisi-TV* and compared the consistency of its portrayal of crime with official data sources. The media data for the study were collected in 2005, 2006 and 2008 and consist of twenty-three episodes of the television programme, including 148 crime-related vignettes. From these, sixty-seven, which concentrated on violence, have been analysed more closely.

For the fifth and final sub-study, the victim narratives from *Poliisi-TV*'s news content were analysed. The data for the study were further developed from the media data utilised in the fourth sub-study. In the fifth sub-study, twenty-one vignettes of violence in which the victim was interviewed have been qualitatively analysed. The sub-study examines the ways in which crime-appeal programming contributes to the construction of social narratives about victims of violence. I have given special attention to how the victim is portrayed.

The research questions of the dissertation were explored by using multiple data sets, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as various analytical methods. The sub-studies were published as a series of articles in international peer-reviewed journals. In the section below, I will describe the datasets used in each of these sub-studies (see also Table 1).

Article I. This study reviews several examinations on quantitative datasets. One of the main sets consisted of descriptive data on the reporting of tabloid violence in Finland in the years 1980, 1988, 1993, 1997 and 2000 (Kivivuori et al., 2002). The purpose of these data was to provide descriptive details on the intensity of violence reporting and to develop a standardized model of content analysis with which to measure the reporting of violence in the media. Another crucial media data set was a survey directed to the editors of local newspapers. Of the 242 editors contacted, 121 responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of exactly fifty per cent. (Hagerlund, 2005.) A third important dataset described the quantitative trends of crime reporting on television prime-time news in Finland in the period from 1985 to 2003 (Kemppi and Kivivuori, 2004). Article I also reports on the results of self-reported exposure to crime news in the Mare Balticum Youth Victimization Survey 2002–2003, the National Victimisation Survey (NCVS) 2003 and the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study (FSRD) 2004.

Article II. The material for this study was comprised of data from the NCVS 2003. The sample (n=8,163) is representative of the Finnish population age 15 and above. In Finland, six national victim surveys dealing with personal safety have been carried out since 1980, the last dating from 2009. These surveys provide information about trends in the prevalence and nature of different kinds of violence and accidents. In the 2003 sweep of the NCVS, questions related to media exposure were added to the questionnaire. In Article II, I used these questions to examine the link between news exposure and fear-related phenomena.

Article III. The FSRD 2004 analysed in this sub-study is a nationally representative survey series carried out by the National Research Institute of Legal Policy. I used the fifth sweep of the FSRD series. The sweep was conducted in fifty-five municipal comprehensive schools in the spring of 2004. The population was limited to Finnish language municipal schools, whereas Swedish-language, private and state schools were excluded from the sample. All ninth-grade pupils (ages 15 to 16) comprised the target population, and 85 per cent of the targeted pupils filled out the questionnaire. Originally, the construction of the questions was inspired by the International Self-Report Delinquency (ISRD) questionnaire, an instrument developed by European criminologists in the 1990s.

Article IV. The primary data for the fourth sub-study consisted of 148 crime-related vignettes from the Finnish television programme *Poliisi-TV*. Altogether twenty-three episodes including 148 crime vignettes aired in 2005 (61), 2006 (31) and 2008 (57) were saved in digital form. This raw data constitute some twelve hours of material. All vignettes involving vio-

lence were transcribed. The final data for the article consisted of sixty-seven vignettes involving violence, which were compared with crime statistics and the NCVS data from 2006.

Article V. In the final sub-study, the data from the *Poliisi-TV* programme utilised in Article IV were developed further in order to analyse the portrayals of the victims qualitatively. For this purpose, all violent vignettes that identified the crime victims in interviews were selected for a final analysis. Also homicide stories in which the victim's relatives or/and friends were interviewed were included in the analysis. The final data for the article thus included twenty-one vignettes involving violence.

The data and methods used in this research range from quantitative analyses of survey data to qualitative analyses of the contents of the *Poliisi-TV* programme. The advantage of practising 'mixed methods' (Maruna, 2010) and utilizing 'mixed data' is that each reinforces the other. For example, the surveys used in this research provide a basis for examining associations of relevant phenomena so that findings can be generalized to representative populations. In addition, the qualitative analysis of *Poliisi-TV* offers detailed, contextual information about crime media, but with a narrow scope. The combination of these two types of data provides information about how crime in the media is connected with fear of violence and with social trust, about the contents of one such media product and how similar to the statistics is the picture of violence which the media transmits. This information would be difficult to obtain from either qualitative or quantitative data alone.

Articles II and III are based on victim surveys and self-report delinquency surveys. Both survey techniques are based on an extensive body of methodological research and development (for an overview, see Tourangeau and McNeeley, 2003; Thornberry and Krohn, 2003). These types of surveys are widely believed to yield good or at least satisfactorily reliable and valid results within their main domains of measurement. It should also be noted that the surveys used in Articles II and III had very high response rates (81% in the CATI-based NCVS 2003, 85% in the classroom data collection-based FSRD 2004). Response rates such as these are high by any standard, and they support the generalizability of the findings. The FSRD system takes particular care to include all respondent groups in order to ensure external validity (Kivivuori and Salmi, 2009).

The quantitative content analysis (Article IV) and the narrative text analysis (Article V) are based on a coding protocol developed for a study to examine violence on the front pages of tabloids (Kivivuori et al., 2002). In order to enhance the reliability of both analyses, the data processing, classifications and analytical problems in Articles IV and V have been dis-

cussed thoroughly on various occasions in the post-graduate seminar of the Department of Sociology at the University of Helsinki.

2.2 Survey data (Articles II and III)

The basic analytical goal of Articles II and III was to examine whether exposure to crime news was linked to fear, avoidance behaviour or social trust when victimization and socio-demographic variables were controlled. The ability to control for victimization was regarded as especially important, because any bivariate associations between the consumption of crime news and fear-related phenomena could reflect on the impact of personal or vicarious crime victimization. The basic idea was thus to tease out the link between news exposure and fear when victimization was held constant. Additionally, basic social and structural factors were controlled within the options of the datasets used. In both Articles II and III, the focus of interpretative attention is on the main effects of exposure to crime news on the dependent variables.

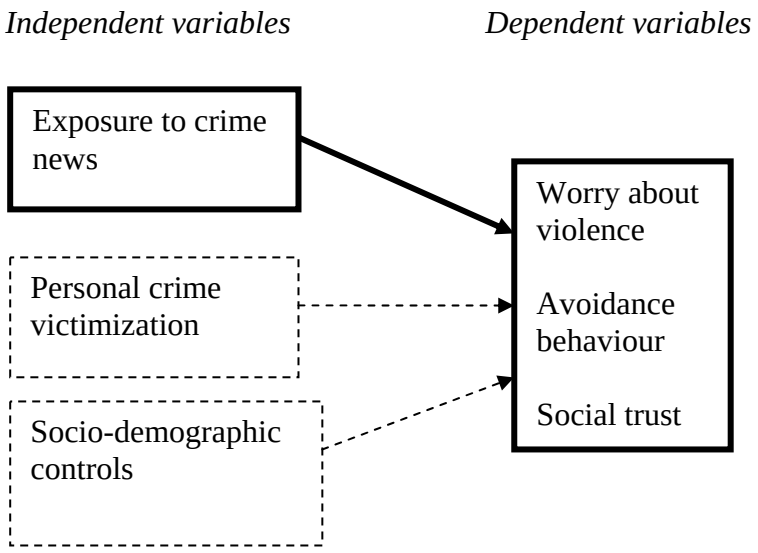

Figure 1 The basic approach of the regression analyses in Articles II and III

In Article II, two dependent variables, namely avoidance behaviour and worry about becoming a victim of violence, were treated as dichotomous variables and therefore analysed with logistic regression. In Article III, OLS regression was used because the dependent variable was normally distributed.

All data used in Articles II and III were based on cross-sectional surveys. Because of the temporal structure of the data, the direction of causality among the variables remains largely based on theoretical interpretation.

Dependent variables

There were three dependent variables: worry about violence, avoidance behaviour and social trust.

*Worry about violence***.** The question of crime-related worry explored in Article II was drawn from the Finnish National Victim Survey. The exact wording of the question was: ‘How worried are you about becoming a victim of violence at night outside of your home?’ In the analysis the options ‘somewhat worried’ and ‘very worried’ were combined to yield a dichotomous variable of worry about violent victimization.

Avoidance behaviour was measured in Article II by the question, ‘Is there an area within one kilometre of your home where you don’t want to walk alone late in the evening or at night?’

Social trust. In Article III, the main dependent variable was social trust. This was measured on a four-item scale, three items of which were drawn from the World Value Surveys. One item about being betrayed by friends was added. The scale thus contained four items: ‘there are only a few persons who I can trust fully’; ‘I can usually be certain that people want what’s best for me’; ‘if I am not careful, other people will take advantage of me’; and ‘my friends have often betrayed me’.

Independent variables

Exposure to crime news was measured using several types of variables.

In Article II, the question measuring the density with which the front pages of tabloids are read was formulated as follows: ‘Tabloid front pages and advertisements can be seen in various places even though one doesn't actually purchase the paper. How often do you read what is said in them?' The given response options were: ‘never, ‘seldom’, ‘now and then’, ‘somewhat frequently’, and ‘frequently’.

The second variable used in Article II measured the variety of media sources that the respondent personally regarded as important as a source of crime news. A sum variable based on seven items was constructed to indicate whether a source was an important one for the respondent in terms of crime information. This sum variable was then trichotomized by the degree

of the respondent's exposure. The resulting variable measured the extent of exposure to crime reporting in the media.

In Article III, young people were asked how often they watched reality-crime programmes and crime magazines on television. They were also asked how often they read news about violence and other crimes in the newspaper (never=1, often=5). A separate question measuring the total amount of television viewing during a normal day was also asked, so that the association of crime news consumption and social trust was measured when general media use intensity was held constant.

Victimization. When studying the association between crime news exposure and fear-related phenomena, it is important to control for personal victimization. Otherwise, any correlation between exposure and fear might reflect the interest placed by the victims on reporting of crime in the news. In the sub-studies for this dissertation (Articles II and III) all links between exposure and fear-related phenomena were ascertained while keeping personal victimization constant.

In analyses based on an adult population (Article I), victimization was controlled by a trichotomical variable (no victimization/threats only/physical violence). Additionally, the role of vicarious victimization was held constant by asking whether the respondent's friends, acquaintances or family members had been violently victimized during the previous twelve months.

In Article III, based on an adolescent population, two aspects of broadly conceived victimization were measured: personal victimization incidents and the subjective feeling of safety in core environments. The measure of general victimization propensity was a sum variable based on all victimization questions in the FSRD 2004 questionnaire. It included bullying at school, theft, robbery, threat of physical violence and physical violence. Respondents were asked whether they had experienced any of these during the previous twelve months or earlier. Depending on the answers, the respondents were classified into one of three groups differentiating the intensity of personal victimization during the life course.

Finally, respondents' subjective feelings of safety were measured with the question of how safe they felt generally in their neighbourhoods, on their way to school, in the schoolyard during the break and in the middle of their hometown in the evening. Thus, in Article III, the feeling of safety was treated as a control variable, so that the link between the exposure to crime news and social trust could be observed when the level of subjective safety was held constant.

Social and structural controls. The variables controlled for were partly different between Articles II and III. This was the result of the variables available in the different data, and the nature of the research questions.

In Article II, the control variables included sex, age, area of residence and employment status. In Article II the social variables included parental support and supervision and teacher support and supervision. These variables were set to measure positive long-term experiences and social control in the lives of adolescents. Both parent and teacher support and supervision scales contained questions about the abilities to encourage, support and monitor the child (parents) and maintain order in the classroom (teachers).

Participating in organized leisure associations was another measure that tapped into the positive long-term sources of social trust among adolescents. In Article III, associations were grouped into religious associations and others. Respondents were asked how often they participated in these associations. The questionnaire also included several questions about how often the respondents spent their leisure time with certain people (e.g. parents, friends) or whether they spent their time alone. The structural variables included measures of the family financial situation, parental employment and family composition.

2.3 *Poliisi-TV* data (Articles IV and V)

In Article IV, twenty-three episodes of the television programme *Poliisi-TV* including 148 crime-related vignettes aired in 2005 (61), 2006 (31) and 2008 (57), were digitally saved. The year 2007 was not included in the data, owing to a lack of research funding. The raw data consisted of twelve hours of material. In the first phase of the data analysis, content analysis was used to filter and organize the topics of the vignettes into headlines in an SPSS matrix. Each vignette served as a unit of analysis.

The qualitative *Poliisi-TV* data used in Article V were further developed from the quantitative data in Article IV. In Article V, I continued examining how and to what extent the sixty-seven violent vignettes analysed in Article IV contained information about the victims of violence. My analytical framework can be described as twofold: firstly, obtaining an overview through basic quantitative analysis and secondly, taking the analysis in a qualitative direction by strictly defining the targeted data contents (see also Lindgren, 2008: 97–8). The final data for Article V consisted of twenty-one vignettes involving violence.

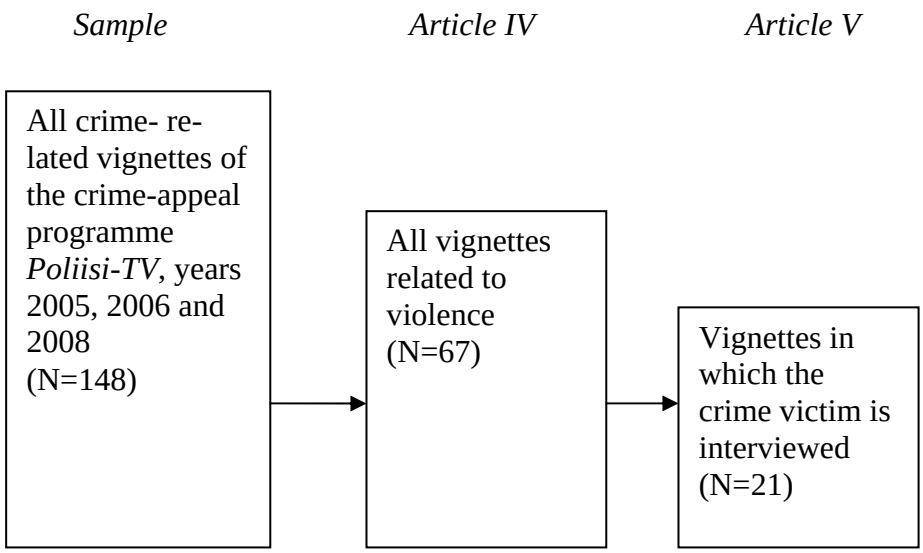

Figure 2 The *Poliisi-TV* data used in content analysis and narrative analysis for Articles IV and V

Content analysis

In Article IV content analysis was utilised to filter and organize the topics of the vignettes into headlines in an SPSS matrix. Each vignette served as a unit of analysis. In both Articles IV and V all stories that reported some kind of real violence were identified as violence. Only intentional non-fictional criminal violence and attempts at intentional violence were included. Stories about harassment and bullying at school or work were also included. Traffic accidents caused by drunk driving were excluded. Related to this process, quantitative elements of the contents were collected and coded into the matrix.

Empirical studies on crime-appeal programmes have directed most attention to four elements of victim and perpetrator traits: age, ethnicity, gender, and the relationship between the parties involved (e.g., Cavender and Fishman, 1998; Oliver, 1994; Cavender and Bond-Maupin, 1993; Dahlquist, 2000). In Article IV it was also examined how the place of violence is portrayed on *Poliisi-TV*. The coding protocol in Article IV contained quantifiable indicators of victim and perpetrator demographics. These included: age, gender, ethnicity, and relationship between perpetrator and victim. In addition, Article IV also explored the different types of violence and the presentation of place of violence in the footage.

Narrative analysis

In Article V, I examined both the narrative structure and the rhetorical structure of the selected twenty-one vignettes on violence. The narrative structure can be explained as the technology of order and the rhetorical structure can be defined as the technology of appeal (Silverstone, 1988: 32). For this study, I combined traditional content analysis with narrative text analysis. Rather than concentrating on particular elements or sections of a single vignette, I treated each vignette as a unit of analysis. Thus, the studied vignettes were compared with each other, in both content and in construction, in order to find common traits and building elements.

The violence narratives were analysed from the perspective of dramaturgy, and both visual and textual contents were included in the analysis. The visual elements (e.g. photos, re-enactment and video footage) and the vocal elements (e.g. music) were transcribed. I carefully translated the selected samples of the transcribed vignettes from Finnish into English. The main objective was to provide concrete examples of the verbal construction and contents of the violence vignettes. Most qualitative traits, such as pauses, hesitations and repetitions of single words that were insignificant in transmitting the main information in a sentence were left out. No additional words were added to the English translations.

3 RESEARCHING CRIME IN THE NEWS MEDIA

Crime in the media is a popular research topic in several disciplines. According to Jenny Kitzinger (2009: 175), some of the divisions about study design and methodology follow geographical and cultural borders. For example, research emphasizing the power of the media is stronger in the United States than in Western Europe, where audience behaviour is better established as a field of research. Research into the power of the media has traditionally been based on quantitative and experimental work rooted in social and political science or mainstream experimental psychology. By contrast, research into audience behaviour accentuates qualitative methods and draws more on the disciplines of cultural studies, literary theory and social anthropology. In Finland, similar divisions hardly exist, since the overall topic of crime reporting in the media is not very conspicuous and has started to expand only with the dawn of the new millennium. In addition to the criminological sub-studies that make up this dissertation, most of the few Finnish studies of crime in the news media have been carried out by communication researchers (Mäkipää and Mörä, 2009; Kivioja, 2008; Syrjälä, 2007).

The differences in the points of departures among various disciplines are neither clear-cut nor self-evident. In fact, there is fairly little consensus on the general findings and methods in the field. However, several characteristics of crime and the media have emerged from content analyses. The most important observations are that stories about crime are prominent in all media (Reiner, 2007), and the number of these stories has been increasing over a relatively long period of time (Davis and McLeod, 2003). In addition, the crime stories published in the media are overwhelmingly about serious violent crimes, whereas white-collar crime is underreported in comparison to victimization surveys and crime statistics (Heber, 2007; Surette, 1998).

Reiner (2007: 378–93) also notes that the offenders and victims portrayed in the media tend to be of higher status and older than those in crime statistics; moreover the media present the risk of victimization as being more serious than it is in the real world. The effectiveness of the police and

criminal justice system is often portrayed in a favourable light in the media, for example, by overemphasizing the proportion of crimes solved. Finally, research shows that the media tend to focus on specific, individual cases and report very little on wider trends, causes or policy issues. Needless to say, studies on crime in the media cannot be reduced to mere content analyses. Still, Reiner's (ibid.) overview effectively sums up the core elements around which most descriptive criminological media research centres.

3.1 Distinguishing criminological research from other disciplines

The criminological perspective on crime in the media emphasizes the association between the media-constructed picture of crime and criminality over other criminological phenomena such as criminality, fear of crime and attitudes. From the point of view of *description*, the underlying question is often, whether the media offer an accurate or a distorted picture of the quantity, traits and trends of criminality. From the point of view of *explanation*, the crime content or exposure to crime in the media is typically treated as an independent variable that explains other phenomena. Thus, in contrast to communication studies the main difference in criminological research is that it deals with the external consequences of media violence rather than internal factors, such as journalistic conventions, which influence media representations of crime. For example, a criminologist might be interested in whether news reports on certain crimes increase criminal activity, whereas a communication researcher might wish to determine what journalistic or economic changes influenced the news reporting.

According to Kivivuori (2002: 310–15), criminological research on crime media has centred on three main areas of interest: the association between crime reporting in the media and fear of crime, the connection between crime in the media and people's propensity to report crimes to the police and the relationship between crime in the media and punitive attitudes and/or public opinions about crime and criminality. These three interests can also be inter-connected. Thus, fear of crime can have an effect on the propensity to report crimes to the police or on individual attitudes. In addition, a major area of interest is the possible criminogenic effects of the media. This line of research explores whether exposure to crime news causes criminal behaviour generally or generates so-called copycat crimes (Surette, 1998: 137). There are also criminological mechanisms that predict

that media exposure can also protect individuals from crime. Such mechanisms include routine activities and deterrence effects (Kivivuori, 2008: 247). As for recent descriptive research into media content, the criminological interest has been on portrayals of gender and ethnic minorities (e.g. Bjornstrom et al., 2010; Gruenewald et al., 2009; Cotter et al., 2008; Dixon, 2008; Cavender et al., 1999; Kooistra et al., 1998).

The following sections are entitled ‘causes’, ‘processes’ and ‘consequences’. Causes are understood as the motives, reasons and underlying forces that are believed to guide and shape news production. The middle section, ‘processes’, introduces two key theories of how media messages reach and impact the audience. Finally, the ‘consequences’ section addresses some of the main research interests in media criminology. Since the field of crime in the media is vast and multidisciplinary, the presentation below is not comprehensive. Some major elements from psychology, communication research and other disciplines are discussed but the main focus remains on criminology.

3.2 Causes

The next section examines the possible causes of the vast amount of crime and violence in the media. In the introduction (section 1.2) some of the proximate causes of the increase in crime reporting in Finland were described. In the present section the discussion is based on the theoretical traditions of crime news research. The questions are the following: what kinds of internal processes produce the pattern in media contents in crime reporting and why is there so much crime and violence in the media?

Newsworthiness

According to Reiner (2007: 403), news content is generated mainly through reporters’ sense of ‘newsworthiness’, or, in other words, what makes a good story for the target audience, rather than any ideological considerations. Reiner (ibid.) mentions the following news values as shaping news production: immediacy, dramatization, personalization, titillation and novelty. The primacy of these news values explains why violence and sex crimes dominate the media’s reporting of crime, and help to explain why the media concentrate on higher-status offenders and victims, particularly celebrities. These values also account for the tendency to avoid stories about crime in general, or explain criminal trends and patterns. Yvonne

Jewkes (2004: 40) has listed the following twelve items as the contemporary criteria of newsworthiness in the UK: threshold,[5] predictability,[6] simplification, individualism, risk, sex, celebrity or high-status persons, proximity, violence, spectacle or graphic imagery, children and conservative ideology and political diversion.[7]

Jewkes' criteria of news values – with the exception of the last two – can also be applied to the Finnish media. Unlike the UK (and the US), in the Finnish mass media children and other particularly vulnerable victims are not popular or highly visible. The main reason is that they are perceived to be too vulnerable to be utilised by the media (see section 4.5 below and Article V). The last criterion, 'conservative ideology and political diversion', seems alien, since the Finnish mass media are not politically divided between 'liberal' and 'conservative' products (Jyrkiäinen, 2010). For example, tabloids are not perceived as emphasizing right-wing values as is the case in the UK (Jewkes, 2004: 58). Neither is there a Finnish version of the 'populist punitiveness' in the Governments' attitudes to penal policy, which according to Jewkes (ibid.), characterizes the political attitudes in the UK and is replicated in the US and many other countries around the world. By contrast, the Finnish pragmatic-rational approach to criminal policy and sanctioning has a strong social-policy orientation (Lappi-Seppälä, 2006: 139). All of these observations dispel the notion that there is a 'symbiotic relationship between the mass media and politicians' (Jewkes, 2004: 58) in Finland.

The dominant ideology approach

The characteristically negative assumptions about implications of crime reporting in the media for society rose at the same time in the 1960s as fear of crime became a topic of social concern (Lee, 2007). The early studies on crime in the news supported the so-called dominant ideology model (Reiner, 2007: 402), an approach originating from Marxism. Essentially, this meant that the immediate source of the news content was seen to be the professional and personal ideology of the reporter.

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[5] The threshold of a story depends on whether the reporter works within the national, local or global media. After a story reaches the news, it has to fulfil further criteria in order to stay in the news.

[6] If an event is rare, extraordinary or unexpected, it will have considerable newsworthiness. Moreover, unpredictability gives a story novelty value.

[7] Conservative ideology and diversion refer to British news agenda that emphasizes deterrence and repression as well as the notion that there is a symbiotic relationship between the media and politicians.

The dominant ideology (or political ideology) approaches propose that, like all other capitalist institutions, the media are owned by the ruling élite and operate in the interests of this class (Jewkes, 2004). For example, the dominant ideology approaches of the 1970s highlighted the extent to which those in power manipulated the media to harness support for policies that criminalized those with the least power in society (see, for example, Hall et al., 1978). A common assumption from this perspective was to view the media as a powerful entity affecting the social environment, usually negatively.

According to Thompson (1990), the media can be said to work ideologically when they operate in support of currently established patterns of power and subordination in society. As a consequence of certain selected journalistic conventions, the media produce meanings and interpretations that support certain hegemonic interests. Reiner (2007), however, concludes that this is rarely a result of any conscious agenda on the part of journalists or editors, but rather part of the media's inner logic. For example, the professional standards for what constitutes 'a good story', the demands of the audience, commercial interests, the rhythm of news production – all indirectly and subtly contribute to the ideological dimensions of the media.

More recent arguments defending the dominant ideology approach have pointed out that the media transmit a very narrow picture of reality, since the ownership and control of the mass media are concentrated in the hands of only a few individuals. Moreover, the media's messages are seen to be ideologically emphasized, since there is reliance among editors on a relatively limited pool of experts and readily available sources. (Jewkes, 2004: 19.)

In the UK and the US, the dominant ideology remains influential within criminological debates. According to Reiner (2007: 327), because of organizational necessities as much as for ideological reasons, the British media present viewpoints on crime and criminal justice policy that support official definitions. Increasingly, the media tend to frame crime issues from a 'law and order' perspective so that other approaches are marginalized (Altheide, 2002; Cavender, 2004; Greer, 2003). In Finland recent empirical or theoretical investigations into the ideological dimensions of crime journalism are close to non-existent.[8] This may reflect the realities of the Finnish media scene in which for example some 90 per cent of newspapers are politically unaffiliated (Jyrkiäinen, 2010) and the state-owned broadcasting company YLE is an influential media player. Neither can Finnish newspa-

[8] See however the early critical study by Hémanus (1966).

pers – even tabloids – be classified as conservative or liberal, as is common in the UK and other two-party countries.

Infotainment and tabloidization

The general increase in the reporting of crime news has been observed in many western nations, including Finland, Sweden, Germany and the UK (Kivivuori et al., 2002; Heber, 2007; Pfeiffer et al., 2005; Reiner, 2007). This trend can be connected with the developments discussed by media researchers and labelled infotainment (Brants, 1998), tabloidization (Sparks and Tulloch, 2000) and sensationalism (Grabe et al., 2001). In connection with news contents in particular, all of these concepts roughly refer to the notion that news features provoking emotional responses the audience have increased significantly in recent decades.

Since today a variety of complex phenomena are made as simple as possible in order to communicate (and sell) media products to the largest number of people, news production in general is seen to have had a 'dumbing down' effect (Postman, 1985). Television entertainment and perhaps reality television in particular have often been used as prime examples of this effect. And indeed, research shows that the major gratification of reality television appears to be a habitual pastime and entertainment (Papacharissi and Mendelson, 2007), even if audiences tend to interpret reality-crime programmes as news rather than as entertainment (Oliver and Armstrong, 1995). Furthermore, certain features of reality television, such as the 'fly on the wall' perspective, appear to contribute to the voyeuristic appeal (Baruh, 2009). On the other hand, since there are no hidden cameras and the contrived nature of the constant surveillance is openly announced, reality television, the claim goes, requires sophisticated media literacy from its audience (Rolston, 2007: 350; see also Johnson, 2006).

The reasons for developments such as tabloidization have often been explained by commercialism and globalization. As television news has been commercialized, the need to make the news entertaining has become a top priority. As a result, broadcasters are forced to borrow and adapt features of entertainment genres, which in turn put emphasis on personalities, style, storytelling skills and spectacles. (Thussu, 2007: 3.) The outcome of this development is seen in the globalization of US-style ratings-driven television journalism dominated by the so-called 'soft news' (celebrities, crime, corruption and violence), which has undermined the public-service ethos of television.

However, the global infotainment made possible by the creation of a global infrastructure of policies, trade and hardware is seen not only as a negative phenomenon. While continually making formats and contents more and more similar, the global infotainment sphere also has the potential to produce competing versions of journalism. Thus, some scholars (Thussu, 2007; Johnson, 2006) have argued that there is a need to go beyond the debate about the dumbing-down effect (see also section 5.2).

With the differences between news and entertainment becoming blurred, media researchers face new challenges in defining media genres and developing new methods of inquiry (Nabi and Oliver, 2009). Some scholars increasingly question the traditional distinction between 'soft' and 'hard' news, and between 'news' and 'entertainment' (Price and Feldman, 2009: 123).

Conclusions on causes

As the viewpoints presented above suggest, the causes of crime content in the media and its traits can both be explained by various factors. The most concrete and straightforward explanations lie in the inner logic of news production. Crime is a leading news category, as it meets the standards and criteria of classic newsworthiness. This tendency combined with the globalization of news production further enhances the demand for news that is short, entertaining and has a human interest angle. A more complex explanation of crime in media reporting is to theorize about the power structures of journalists and media corporations in society.

The political ideology model has been recently challenged by the pluralist paradigm, which tends to be a far more positive reading of the mass media as embodiments of intellectual freedom and diversity offered a knowledgeable and sceptical audience. The pluralists suggest that the political ideology model over-emphasizes the intent of powerful institutions to deceive the public (Jewkes, 2004: 19). They point out, for example, that the Internet and especially the new forms of social and interactive media have enabled new forms of dialogue between audiences and the free exchange of ideas and ideologies.

Indeed, in an era dominated by new media such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube* and *WikiLeaks*, which enable the production and publication of contents anonymously by consumers themselves, it is no longer possible to track down or to recognize a power-exercising élite that would be able to dominate media content (see also, the Economist, 2011). Thus, it appears

evident that in explaining media processes and effects – at least in the Western world – the political ideology model is currently outdated.

3.3 Media processes

According to Bryant and Miron (2004), agenda setting, cultivation and uses and gratifications were by far the three most often cited theories in mass communication research published in key scholarly journals between 1956 and the year 2000.[9] Unlike cultivation and uses and gratifications, agenda-setting has not had such a strong impact on media criminology. Moreover, the core arguments of agenda-setting are rather similar to those of the dominant ideology model discussed above. Therefore, the discussion below concentrates on cultivation and uses and gratifications, and does not deal with agenda-setting.

Cultivation

As a theory of media effects, cultivation suggests that watching television has an influence on beliefs and opinions about the real world. The cultivation theory has been particularly influential on communication research, although criminologists have also utilised and developed their own versions, which have been applied to forms of media other than television (see, for example, Liska and Baccaglini, 1990). The essence of cultivation is the idea that the media portray a world more menacing than the world most people inhabit. This claim has also been verified by empirical evidence in numerous studies of media content (for an overview, see, Surette, 1998; Reiner et al., 2003; Kafatou-Haeusermann, 2007). In general, the observation that crime reporting in the media exaggerates the amount of crime in the real world is something about which most researchers tend to agree. The cultivation theory builds on this observation, but goes further by suggesting that exposure to crime in the media can result in distorted perceptions of reality.

A significant body of empirical evidence supports the cultivation hypothesis (Shanahan and Morgan, 1999). For example, the main findings in early cultivation studies (Gerbner and Gross, 1976) indicated that fearful

[9] The main argument of the agenda-setting theory is that the mass media have the ability to bring about cognitive change among individuals and structure their thinking. As McCombs and Shaw (1994) have noted, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about.

people tend to be more dependent on established authority, more punitive and more likely to submit to authoritarian measures of control. The third sub-study of the present research (Article III) indicated that among Finnish adolescents, regular exposure to crime reality programmes on television is related to lower levels of trust, a finding that supports the cultivation theory. Research has also shown that exposure to crime programmes can breed fear (e.g. Romer et al., 2003).

Despite the former popularity of cultivation theory, the support for the hypothesis that crime reporting in the media creates a 'mean-world' outlook on life is both empirically and methodologically inconsistent, and a number of writings dispute the very existence of the cultivation effect (for an overview, see Ditton et al., 2004; see also Article III for more literature on the cultivation theory). Thus, according to Greer (2009: 432), the greatest problems with the cultivation analysis do not arise from the validity of its central concerns, but rather from the methodological application of these concerns. A study that re-examined Gerbner's data (Hughes, 1980) concluded that one major methodological shortcoming was the use of univariate analysis instead of multivariate analysis. This resulted in a reverse direction of the effects of heavy television watching and fear. Later attempts to establish a positive relationship between television viewing and fear have been inconsistent, both in sample size and selection method. There has also been considerable variance in the choice of measure of both independent and dependent variables. (Ditton et al., 2004.)

Perhaps the most important shortcoming of the cultivation analysis was pointed out by Morgan (2009: 80–81). Since Gerbner's time, the 1970s, the media environment has changed enormously. Yet, even if overall television viewing levels continue to reach new heights, audiences have been fragmented, as hundreds of alternative channels are currently available. In addition, new technologies give viewers a previously unimaginable degree of control over where, when and how they watch television. Thus, the future applications of cultivation theory seem rather limited despite the fact that the theory's fundamental claims still enjoy wide support across an array of research angles and disciplines.

Uses and gratifications

A major scholarly change in media studies occurred in the mid-1990s when researchers dismissed the concerns about what the media do to people and turned the question around by asking instead, 'What do people do with the media?' (Jewkes, 2003: 25.) Both communication researchers (Nabi and

Oliver, 2009) and criminologists (Greer, 2009: 3) pointed out that the quantity of violence in the media is not alone sufficient to explain changes in levels of fear or in any other emotive state. Or as Reiner (2007) put it: 'How viewers interpret images of violence is not just a function of the amount of blood seen or numbers of screams heard'.

According to Rubin (2009: 147), uses and gratifications supplement other media effects approaches for studying media processes. The uses and gratifications theory evolved as a perspective that emphasizes the role of the audience to explain the choice of channel and message selection, interpretation, response and impact. Audience members are not simply passive targets of media messages. Instead, they actively select media messages and the ways of using them. Besides emphasizing individual choice, uses and gratifications underline the role of social and psychological factors in individual media use.

There has been an explosive growth in uses-and-gratifications research in the newer media environment of the early twenty-first century. Studies on the use of the Internet have been especially popular in the last ten years (Rubin, 2009: 153–54). Uses and gratifications have been seen as a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the early stages of the newer communication media (Ruggiero, 2000). However, the theory has also received a fair amount of criticism of its core assumption, namely that people seek out the media to satisfy a personal need, especially to entertain themselves. For example, Lull (2000: 111) argued that audiences do not always accept media content, and not all media are meant to provide gratification or to satisfy people's need for entertainment. More importantly, audiences do not always benefit from using the media, and not all media consumption is based on people's willingness or choice. As for criminology, the uses-and-gratifications approach is still waiting to be widely acknowledged and utilised, since as Greer (2009: 3) has pointed out, a minority of researchers is stepping outside the purely quantitative paradigm of media criminology.

3.4 Consequences and effects

One of the most persistent debates in criminology concerning the mass media is the extent to which the media can be said to cause aggressive, anti-social, deviant or criminal behaviour. Still, most of the effects research on crime in the media has been conducted by experimental psychologists. According to Uribe and Gunter (2007: 213–14), audience research has identified six categories of media content with emotion-eliciting properties:

sex, violence, destruction, humour, celebrities and other emotional content. The latter includes footage showing people expressing strong emotions as sadness, anger, or happiness.

In criminology the debates about the effects of the media revolve around two principal axes: firstly, the notion that fear of crime is exacerbated by excessive consumption of crime coverage in the media, and secondly, that deviance in the media causes deviant behaviour in society (Leishman and Mason, 2003: 18). In addition, the impact of crime reporting in the media on people's punitive attitudes has intrigued criminologists (Surette, 1998: 236).

In this section, I will briefly comment on two research traditions: the general psychological study of the effects of the media on violence and aggression, and the few Finnish studies on the link between crime in the media and criminal behaviour. While the topic of my research is not the link between media and violence, or even the link between the *news* media and crime, there is nevertheless a need to comment briefly on these topics. If the media are able to provoke such strong reactions as aggressive emotions and behaviours, then they also have the potential to generate fear, avoidance behaviour and mistrust.

Aggression

Communications research and psychology have produced a wealth of evidence on the effects of violence in the media on aggression. For example, Bushman and Anderson (2001) have claimed that the link between exposure to TV violence and aggressive behaviours is nearly as strong as the link between smoking two packs of cigarettes a day and developing lung cancer. According to Nabi (2009: 212), more than five decades of scientific data have led to the irrefutable conclusion that exposure to violence in the media increases aggression. Moreover, about 300 studies involving some 50,000 subjects have been conducted on the topic, and these studies have been reviewed and analysed numerous times (Bushman and Huesmann, 2006; Paik and Comstock, 1994).

Experimental studies have shown that exposure to violence in the media causes people to behave more aggressively immediately afterwards (Bushman et al., 2009: 362), the reason being that violent content can prime aggressive cognitions, increase arousal and thereby generate an aggressive (i.e. angry), affective state (Nabi, 2009: 212). The conclusion in psychological research on the effects of the media on aggression seems inevitable: regardless of the methods used or the specific media product

studied exposure to violence in the media increases aggression and violence (Bushman et al., 2009: 363). There appears to be fairly little objection to this association among communication researchers.

However, the link between media and aggression has also been criticized, mainly by criminologists (see, for example, Gauntlett, 2001; Leishman and Mason, 2003; also Jewkes, 2004 and Reiner, 2007). For instance, it has been argued that findings from experimental designs are only partially valid outside the laboratory (Surette, 1998: 114). In addition, the idea of isolating television, film or any other medium as a variable and ignoring all the other factors that might influence a person's behaviour is considered too crude and too reductive an idea to be of any epistemological value. (Jewkes, 2004: 11.) Reiner (2007: 327) has also criticized media effects research because it has mainly assessed the consequences of representations of crime, using rather inadequate models and methods, instead of using the theoretically more plausible criminogenic implications of the media, such as the celebration of consumerism.

Criminal behaviour

Despite their criticism of the findings of experimental psychology on aggression, criminologists have done surprisingly few studies on the actual criminogenic effects of the media. As Ray Surette (1998: 114) notes, only a few people have specifically examined the media as a cause of crime; most research has focused on the media as a cause of social aggression and violence. This might explain at least in part, the confusion regarding the findings on aggression and criminal behaviour.

In Finland the association between crime in the media and criminal behaviour has been studied on two occasions. The effect of a Finnish fictional crime film on burglaries was examined by Anne Alvesalo and Pekka Santtila (2004).[10] The main objective was to explore whether the movie *Pahat pojat* ('Bad Boys') was followed by crimes that were similar to those portrayed in the film. *Pahat pojat* was based on the crime spree of four Finnish brothers, who achieved nation-wide notoriety for their relatively spectacular property crimes targeting cash-operated petrol pumps. The research (Alvesalo and Santtila, 2004) indicated that during the first month after the film was premiered the number of burglaries increased by 19 per cent, a statistically significant figure. Overall, the findings suggested that the film

[10] There are other studies that focus on or mainly include the effects of fictive media contents. The Alvesalo and Santtila study is discussed here because the film was based on real-life events.

caused a short-term increase in burglaries. However, the findings did not support the hypothesis that the film motivated previously non-criminal persons to commit crimes. Rather, it appeared that after the film's premiere more experienced offenders committed burglaries than during other periods.

Another Finnish study explored the association between crime in the news and criminal behaviour among adolescents (Kivivuori, 2004). The findings were rather straightforward: the more the respondent watched reality-crime shows on television the more likely it was that he or she had committed violent crimes and property offences. The same applied to reading tabloid headlines and advertisements on the street. These associations were robust in multivariate analyses, which controlled for a large number of standard predictors of violence and property offences. The empirical findings were consistent in both the selection and the causation interpretations. Selection refers to the fact that criminally active persons are more likely to expose themselves to crime reporting, much like any legitimate activity results in related media interests. Causation refers to the possible crime-inducing and crime-inspiring effect of exposure to news about crime.

There is strong evidence that media images can influence criminal behaviour, but it appears their direct effect overall is small relative to other factors (Reiner, 2007: 327; see also, Savage and Yancey, 2008). This is largely because people vary in their interpretation of representations according to demographic, generational and other life-course factors. Sure enough, copycat crime appears to be a persistent social phenomenon, common enough to influence the total crime picture, yet more by influencing offenders' choice of techniques than by criminalizing individuals (Surette, 1998: 115; Alvesalo and Santtila, 2004).

Fear

Fear of crime is by far the most popular area of research in media criminology. A number of studies have examined the proposition that the media present crime stories in ways that selectively distort and manipulate public perceptions, thereby creating a false picture of crime, which in turn promotes stereotyping, bias and gross oversimplification of facts (Surette, 1998). The main claim has been that the ever-expanding reporting of crime in the media both generates and enforces feelings of fear and insecurity in the media-consuming public and thus poses a threat to democracy (Gerbner and Gross, 1976).

Korander's study (1994) examined these squestions in Finland. Respondents were asked to evaluate the factors which had the greatest impact on their feelings of fear and insecurity. The factor mentioned most often was the newspaper reports on violence. A UK study (Williams and Dickinson, 1993) concluded that people who read many crime reports in newspapers are more fearful than people who read less news reports on crime. This tendency was especially evident with regard to tabloid newspapers. Respondents who read tabloids on a regular basis were three times more likely to be afraid of being violently assaulted than were other respondents. A study conducted in the United States (Chiricos et al., 2000) found that local news reports affected fear levels more strongly than news about criminal incidents that took place elsewhere. In Article II of the present research, fear of crime and avoidance behaviour were shown to be associated with exposure to crime news in a nationally representative sample of Finnish adults.

A fairly recent study (Eschholz, 1997) of crime in the media and fear of crime in the United States showed that the association between fear and the media has a fifty-fifty chance. Of seventy-three research attempts to analyse the relationship between newspaper or television consumption and fear, thirty found a positive relationship, and forty-three did not. Indeed, many criminologists share the opinion that the media-fear relationship is far more complicated one than has previously been acknowledged. In general, several studies point to a complex relationship that must take into account many variables including the medium, the type of programme involved and the nature of the audience. Different viewing and reading habits must be considered, as should the direction of the potential causal links (Reiner, 2000; see also Livingstone, 1999).

Punitive attitudes

Researchers such as Pfeiffer et al. (2005) have argued that the media, by offering an overblown picture of the prevalence of crime, encourage the public to develop tougher sentencing attitudes. It is often suggested that fear is the mechanism that mediates the link between exposure to crime news and punitive attitudes.

Results of an American study (Oliver and Armstrong, 1995) indicated that frequent viewing and greater enjoyment of reality-based crime programmes are related to punitive attitudes. On the other hand, no such connection was found in another American study (Dowler, 2003). Nor was there an association between the amount of television watching and punitive

attitudes. As for print media as the main source for crime news, no correlation was found there with punitivity either.

In Sweden, Demker et al. (2010) found that regular readers of the Swedish tabloid *Aftonbladet* were clearly more in favour of introducing the death penalty than people who read the tabloids less often. The researchers concluded that consumption of sensationalized crime stories correlates with more punitive attitudes, at least among males. Pfeiffer et al. (2005) analysed German survey data and concluded that the total amount of television viewing is associated with the belief that crime is rising. They also found that respondents who watched private television more than the public broadcasting service had a more distorted perception of crime trends.

Conclusions on consequences and effects

Research findings on the core relationship between crime in the media and attitudes as well as crime in the media and fear of crime are complex. Reviews of the research indicates that the results are mixed regarding the influence of the news media on creating an attitude of fear among the general public (Surette, 1998). This complexity is also reflected in the fact that empirical investigations on these topics are surprisingly few in number.

Overall, there is relatively strong evidence that exposure to crime news is linked to aggression and even in some conditions, to criminal behaviour. Similarly, there is some evidence that exposure to crime news is associated with fear and punitive attitudes. Scholars studying such links do not claim that media exposure is the only cause of such phenomena. Most acknowledge that media exposure influences people’s emotions, behaviours and attitudes in interaction with other social and psychological variables. Selection effects are often cited as well. Thus, people tend to expose themselves selectively to media that are consonant with their political views, even when competing choices are available (Mutz and Martin, 2001). Similarly, aggressive, criminally active and fearful persons may self-select themselves into consumers of crime news.

4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1 Trends in crime reporting (Article I)

The main objective of the article was to review recent research on media trends in reporting crime in Finland. The overall picture is one of rather consistent increase in the non-fictional portrayal of crime, especially violence, during the last few decades. Article I also indicates that Finland has witnessed not only an increase in crime reporting but also a flood of *research* on the reporting of crime in the media during the last ten years. This research interest has been mainly directed towards tabloids, whereas the contents of broadsheet newspapers and other media sources have been studied to a far lesser extent.

Studies of the Finnish tabloids *Iltalehti* and *Ilta-Sanomat* have yielded several conclusions. Firstly, each of the two tabloids increased the reporting on violence, crime and accidents in the 1990s (Huovila, 2002). Secondly, two of the best-selling news topics in tabloids have been celebrities and crimes (Kivioja, 2004). Thirdly, the intensity of reporting violence increased drastically between 1988 and 1993 (Kivivuori et al., 2002). Fourthly, there have been significant qualitative changes in homicide reporting during the years 1980–2000. The reports have become more sentimental and more focused on the experiences of ordinary citizens instead of on the police and other officials (Mäkipää and Mörä, 2009). The increase in crime reporting in the tabloids seemed to reach a saturation point at the end of the 1990s, but more recent observations indicate that the reporting grew in quantity at least until the year 2006 (Syrjälä, 2007). Hagerlund's (2005) research showed that crime is a prevalent topic in local newspapers as well.

Research findings on crime reporting on television are consistent with the findings on the printed press coverage of crime. A study of Finnish prime-time television news (Kemppi and Kivivuori, 2004) showed that the period 1985–2003 was characterized by a significant increase in crime-related topics. During this period crime-related contents increased from 19 per cent to 42 per cent. The sharpest increase took place in the mid-1990s. Violence and drug-related news especially increased.

Article I also summarizes some basic findings about the self-reported prevalence of exposure to crime news reporting.[11] During 2002–2004 questions about the exposure to crime news were added to several survey research projects, such as the Mare Balticum Youth Victimization Survey and the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study. These surveys have shown, for example, that approximately 70 per cent of Finns read the tabloid ads on a regular basis and that nearly half of the population in the age group 15–16 watch reality-crime programming at least occasionally (see Article I, 213).

Article I concludes by contrasting trends in reporting violence with actual levels of violence and fear. The study shows that although both fear and crime reporting levels increased drastically between 1988 and 1997, the findings in victimization surveys since 2003 indicate that fear of crime is decreasing. Thus, fear of crime levels have diverged from crime reporting levels since the beginning of the new millennium. Several possible explanations for this trend are discussed in the article as well as below, in section 4.6, where the most recent survey results from 2009 are considered.

4.2 Crime in the news and fear of violence (Article II)

According to Ditton et al. (2004), studies on the relationship between media and fear of crime have yielded inconsistent results and have been problematic in their of interpretations. Still, there is some level of agreement on some specific findings. For example, the perceived reality and the total amount of violent content have been noted to affect levels of fear (Escholz et al., 2003). Television programmes that tend to blur the line between fact and fiction have specifically been blamed for generating fear (Oliver and Armstrong, 1995). These programmes include reality-crime programmes such as *Poliisi-TV*, analysed in Articles IV and V.

Article II investigates the association between crime in the news and fear of violence. The article draws on the 2003 sweep of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NSCV) and deals with both emotional and behavioural aspects of fear of crime, using two dependent variables: worry about becoming a victim of violence and avoidance behaviour caused by safety concerns.

[11] Some of these findings are based on Articles II and III and are therefore not presented here, but discussed in the following sections.

The core finding is that reading the front pages of tabloids was related both to fear of victimization and avoidance behaviour, while using multiple crime news sources was related to fear, but not to avoidance behaviour. It is particularly interesting that the people reading the tabloids frequently were more prone to avoidance behaviour than were other respondents. This connection is evident only with the reading of tabloids, whereas the total exposure to crime in the media did not have an effect on avoidance behaviour.

The observed associations remained robust when several relevant factors, such as prior crime victimization, sex, age and area of residence were held constant. The victimization finding is of particular relevance here. It is conceivable that prior victimization could result in increased consumption of crime news and worry, thus creating a spurious association between the two. By contrast, the present findings suggest that the association between exposure to crime news on the front pages of tabloids and fear-related outcomes is genuine and robust, at least with respect to victimization and other controls.

Another major finding is that being unemployed or on disability was associated with increased worry when other factors were held constant. This finding is of great interest because it supports a ‘vicarious fear theory’ wherein economic insecurity finds expression in fear of crime (Article II, 220–21). In this analysis, media exposure and crime victimization were controlled, so the link between economic marginalization and worry is consistent with the vicarious fear theory. This association is discussed in more detail in section 4.6.

Regarding the links between controls and fear, the female gender, urban residency and prior victimization were consistently associated with worry and avoidance behaviour, when exposure to crime news was held constant. Old age was related to worry, but interestingly not to avoidance behaviour. By contrast, vicarious victimization (of friends and relatives) was related to avoidance behaviour, but not to worry. In sum, Article II indicates that in Finland, there is an association between exposure to crime news and fear of crime.

4.3 Crime in the news and social trust (Article III)

Drawing on the FSRD 2004 data, Article III examines the relationship between exposure to crime news and social trust among Finnish adolescents.[12] Research findings on the association between crime reporting in the media and social trust are also somewhat mixed and inconsistent. Cultivation theory, as developed by George Gerbner and his colleagues (for an overview, see Gerbner, 1998, and the discussion above), suggests that extensive exposure to media-reconstructed realities can result in distorted perceptions of the world and even create a 'mean-world' outlook on life (Gerbner and Gross, 1976). However, the research evidence for this claim is paradoxical. For example, heavy television viewing has been connected with taking protective measures against crime (Nabi and Sullivan, 2001), but not with a 'mean-world' attitude. Other findings indicate that exposure to crime-saturated news increases fear (Cohen and Weimann, 2000), while some researchers have found that this is true only for local news (Romer et al., 2003). Television exposure has also been connected with distorted beliefs about actual crime rates (Diefenbach and West, 2001).

In Article III the measures of trust were based on a three-item scale used in the World Value Surveys and complemented by an additional question about having been betrayed by friends. Exposure to crime in the media was measured by asking how often the respondents watched reality-crime TV programmes, and how often they read news about violence and other crimes in the newspaper. A separate question on the total amount of television watching per day was also used to avoid a situation whereby variables of crime news consumption would become proxies for general TV watching. Fear was measured on a four-item scale that explored the levels of fear of violence in different locations. Five different victimization types were used: bullying at school, theft, robbery, threat of physical violence and physical violence. In addition, victimization was classified into three groups, which separated the intensity of the experience during the life course.

[12] In social research trust is often divided into trust in specific individuals or groups (particularised trust) and into trust in more abstract people or systems (generalised trust) (see, for example, Giddens, 1990). Generalised trust is not faith in specific people but faith in the generalised other, or believing that *most people* can be trusted. This dimension of trust was the focus of Article III.

The main finding was that, among Finnish adolescents, viewing reality-crime programmes on television was associated with lack of social trust. This association could not be explained by prior crime victimization, fear of crime or a large number of social and structural controls. In particular, viewing television crime magazines and reality-crime programmes significantly decreased trust among adolescents. However, often reading about crime in the newspapers was not associated with trust. Thus, the use of the visual crime news media appears to cultivate distrust. The findings also indicate that the cultivation effect might be programme or product-specific rather than a result of total media use.

In addition, Article III shows that criminal victimization decreases adolescents' social trust in other people. Crime victimization also reduces trust when fear of crime and exposure to crime in the news are held constant. This finding suggests that the effects of victimization cannot be explained by the idea that victimization creates fear, which in turn reduces trust. The hypothesis that victimized adolescents self-select to be heavy-users of crime news, which in turn reduces trust, is also not supported. Instead, victimization is independently associated with reduced trust, and the persistence of victimization experiences is connected with lower levels of social trust. Bullying has an especially strong association with reduced trust in other people.

Additionally, the findings of Article III indicate that the association between exposure to television crime news and lack of social trust is not a function of deeper links generated by patterns of social interaction or social structural variables. In sum, exposure to media representations of crime appear to diminish young people's social capital by reducing social trust.

4.4 Violence content in television crime-appeal programming (Article IV)

The main objectives of Article IV were to investigate whether violence is similarly distorted in the Finnish crime-appeal programme *Poliisi-TV* as has been reported to be the case in programmes of the same genre in other countries (Reiner, 2007; Dahlquist, 2000; Kafatou-Haeusermann, 2007; Hallin, 2000). In addition, the article discusses the similarities and differences in reporting violence in Finland by comparison with international patterns. The data consisted of 148 crime-related vignettes aired in 2005, 2006 and 2008. Sixty-seven of these vignettes dealt with violence and form the empirical corpus of this article. Vignettes containing violence have

been analysed to a large extent by contrasting them with crime statistics and with data from the National Crime Victimization Survey 2006.

The findings of Article IV show that the amount of violence is highly exaggerated when compared to statistics on crimes reported to the police in Finland, and violence also overrides other topics on the programme, especially traffic offences and white-collar crimes. Nearly half of the programmes total contents (43%) concern violence. The most typical violent acts are assaults, homicides, robberies and rapes. This finding is consistent with international research on crime contents in the media (Reiner, 2007), although the distortion of the statistical data and the media content is not as drastic on *Poliisi-TV* as appears to be the case in some other reality-crime programmes. Thus, although it highlights unusual crimes, *Poliisi-TV* also contains reports on more hidden and rarer types of violence, including harassment and ethnic violence.

In contrast to previous studies, *Poliisi-TV* does not emphasize 'worthy' or 'ideal' victims (Christie, 1986) in its footage. On the contrary, particularly young victims and very old ones are both underrepresented. The representation of gender, however, is consistent with the statistics: men are portrayed both as victims and perpetrators. Female victims are not overemphasized as has been the case is some prior studies on crime in the media (Kooistra et al. 1998; Dahlquist 2000). Ethnic minorities are underrepresented, both as perpetrators of violence as well as its victims, a finding which to some extent conflicts with statistics on reported crimes. This finding also differs significantly from previous research findings. The proportion of strangers (that is, offenders who are previously unknown to the victim) as violence perpetrators is exaggerated in the programme. On the other hand, violence between family members and relatives corresponds to the statistics rather well.

Although the findings in Article IV confirm *Poliisi-TV's* over-emphasis on 'stranger-danger', which appears to be typical of reality-crime programmes, the study also indicates that more hidden types of violence can be and are reported in these programmes. Thus, *Poliisi-TV* offers numerous exceptions to the reality-crime genre by transmitting a more nuanced picture of violence than is traditionally the case. It is also likely that similar findings could be found in countries where crime reporting does not take as sensational form as it does in the US and the UK.

4.5 Violence narratives and representations of crime victims (Article V)

Article V examines the ways in which crime-appeal programming contributes to the construction of social narratives of victims of violence. The article traces techniques and victim-specific attributes that are used to define victims on *Poliisi-TV*. All violent vignettes that identify the actual crime victims by way of interviews are included in the analysis. In addition, homicide, in which the victim's relatives or/and friends were interviewed are included. The final data were comprised of twenty-one vignettes of violence, which were then textually and visually analysed from the point of dramaturgy. Here dramaturgy is understood as the chronology of events in the vignette. As Anu Kantola (1998: 22–23) has put it, dramaturgy is a technique of telling a story in a fashion that enables the reader or viewer to empathize with the story, identify with the characters and become interested in their lives.

Article V draws on Nils Christie's (1986) classic concept of the ideal victim, which is widely recognized and referred to in criminology. This concept addresses the paradox between real-life crime victims and imaginary victims. Christie defined the ideal victim as 'a person or a category of individual who – when hit by crime – most readily [is] given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim' (ibid.: 18). The ideal victim should have the following characteristics: the person is weak, is pursuing a respectable goal when the crime occurs, and can by no means be blamed for being where she or he was when the crime took place.

The vignettes of violence analysed in Article V are rather similar in construction. The conflict of the violent act is established right at the beginning of the vignette. This is usually followed by descriptions of the consequences and the recovery strategies of the victims. The violence narratives progress chronologically in four stages, which in Article V are described as: *introducing the victim, life prior victimization, the sudden crisis and hardships to follow*, and *means of recovery.*

The vignettes tend to use one of two basic modes to portray victims: the survivor and the victim. The *survivors* have either overcome or learned to live with the hardships caused by the violent victimization and are portrayed as heroic characters who have found the strength to carry on with their lives. The second narrative type presents the victims as physically and mentally beaten, often depressed characters, whose lives have been permanently shattered by the hideous crime. Thus, they are truly portrayed as *victims.*

The visual materials of the violence narratives convey a strong picture of the traditional nuclear family. The survivors especially are never portrayed as individuals, but always as family members and members of the community. They are mothers and fathers, spouses and siblings. The significant role of the nuclear family is so strongly emphasized in the programme that it is hard to imagine a *Poliisi-TV* victim outside the parameters of a family. In fact, not being a family member is equivalent to not being a proper crime victim altogether. This especially applies to the survivors.

Article V indicates that the *Poliisi-TV* victims are not vulnerable old ladies (Walklate, 2007: 28), 'virginal married mothers' (Cavender et al., 1999) or small children (Wardle, 2007), those who are traditionally at the top of the media's victimization hierarchy. Instead, the victims on *Poliisi-TV* are middle-aged, middle-class, financially well-off mothers and fathers, who by no means can be considered ideal victims in the same way that Christie's (1986) classic definition would suggest.

Article V suggests that the reason for the missing traditional ideal victims on *Poliisi-TV* is that the strong emphasis on the nuclear family exceeds both vulnerability and innocence as the main attributes of a proper crime victim. The victims on *Poliisi-TV* would perhaps not be given the ultimate status as crime victims in the physical world, but they are ideal for the media, since their vulnerability is less obvious. They are 'us', not 'them'. These characters are easy to identify with since they represent the middle class and their appearance on *Poliisi-TV* highlights the randomness and the constant risk of criminal victimization.

4.5 The crime media – fear paradox of the new Millennium

The findings of sub-studies I, II and III indicate that the simultaneous rise in fear levels and in crime reporting witnessed in the 1990s were linked. Next, I will examine current trends in both phenomena: is fear of crime and crime reporting still on the increase?

Figure 3 contrasts tabloid and television violence with levels of fear and levels of violent victimization. A similar figure was presented in Article I. Here, the figure is supplemented with the most recent data and with information on the development of the unemployment rate.

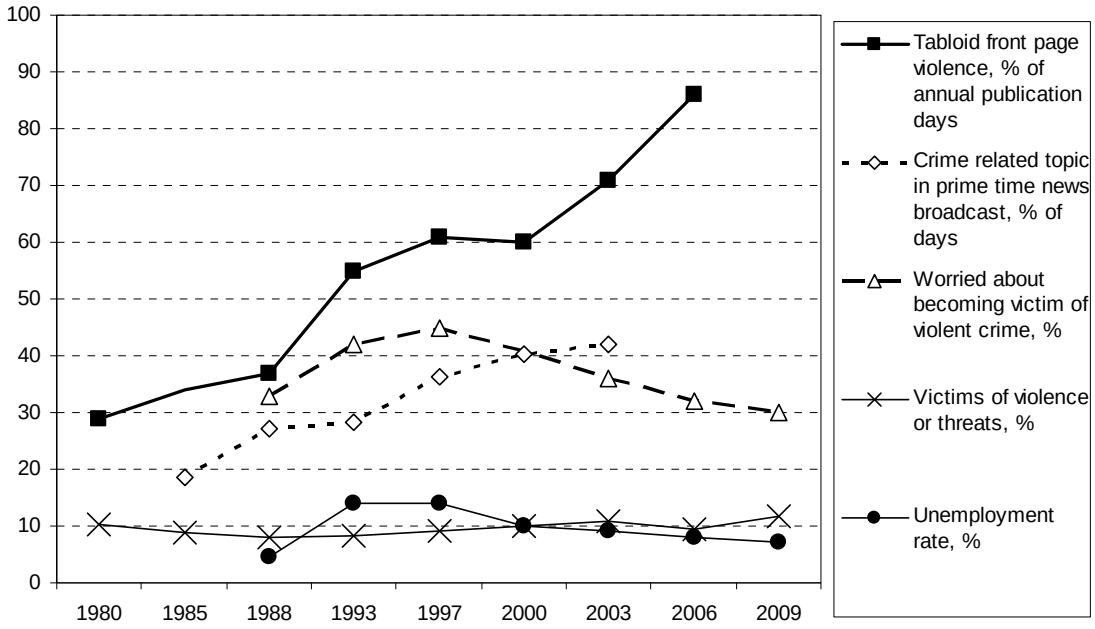

Figure 3 Days during which violence was reported on the front page of at least one of the two tabloids in Finland (% of annual publication days), annual frequency of prime-time news broadcasts featuring a crime-related topic, people who fear violence (% of adult population), victims of violence or violent threats (% of adult population) and unemployment rate (% of working population)[c]

Figure 3 shows that crime reporting in Finland increased on television (Kemppi and Kivivuori, 2004) at least until 2003 and in the tabloids until 2006 (Syrjälä, 2007).[13] Comprehensive data on violent content in the Finnish media have not been collected since 2006. Fear of crime levels increased in Finland during the years 1988 to 1997, but have been decreasing ever since. Whereas 45 per cent of the respondents expressed worry about becoming a victim of violence in 1997, the percentage in 2009 was 'merely' 30. During the observed timeframe, the level of actual violent victimization (including threats) has been comparatively stable, ranging between eight and twelve per cent. Thus, the variation in the levels of victimization experiences has been moderate when compared with the amount of crime news and levels of fear of crime.

Does the observation of the inverse trends refute the link between the media and fear of crime? The answer depends on whether we are examin-

[c] The figures for the year 2000 have been interpolated from the figures of 1997 and 2003 on victimization and fear. The tabloid front-page violence figure from 2006 is based on Hanna Syrjälä's (2007) research.

[13] Although Syrjälä's (2007) study design was based on prior work by Kivivuori et al. (2002), there are minor variations in the definitions of violence between these studies. Therefore, the tabloid violence figure of 2006 is not directly comparable with earlier observations.

ing aggregate or individual-level associations. Even if aggregate level trends are diverging, the individual-level association can be the same, as has so often been suggested. In other words, differential exposure to crime in the media can explain differential fears, even if the number of persons who are fearful is decreasing. Thus, there is no *logical* or *empirical* paradox or inconsistency. However, at the aggregate level, it is important to discuss the reasons why fear of crime has been decreasing. Below I will offer three possible explanations: changes in economic security, changes in the media and changes in people's perceptions and behaviour.

Economic insecurity

Article II in this research gave empirical support for a 'vicarious fear theory', showing that the unemployed express higher levels of fear. This is explained to result from the fact that people tend to channel other insecurities in their lives into fear of crime and that economic insecurity seems to be one of these. Taylor (1996) has also presented qualitative evidence that insecurities about crime are linked to beliefs about declining social trust, intergroup conflict and concerns about the pace and direction of social changes. Hummelsheim et al. (2010) have even suggested that crime may act as a cipher for a variety of social, economic and existential insecurities, which are rooted in the transformations of contemporary late-modern societies. The 'vicarious fear theory' appears plausible also when the unemployment rate trend is added to Figure 3. The unemployment rate appears to be consistent with the general fear trend in the population.

Thus, the rise in fear of crime in the 1990s was likely to have been at least partially the result of an interactive effect involving economic recession and mass unemployment. The most recent figures support this hypothesis, since the global economic depression of 2008 was not reflected in the levels of fear in the same manner as the depression in the 1990s. This was because the recent depression has not caused a similar degree of mass unemployment: in the beginning of 1994 Finland's employment rate was over seventeen per cent, whereas in 2009 it was seven per cent (Eurostat, 2010).

Changes in the media

The annual monitoring of the Finnish news media (Suikkanen and Syrjälä, 2010: 84), based on a sample of eighteen different news media over a fourteen-day period, showed that in 2010, every tenth news report included violence. Since 2006 the amount of violence reporting has been decreasing, a decrease especially evident in the tabloids. Whereas in 2006 the amount of violence in the tabloids was twenty-four per cent, in 2010 the proportion had decreased to thirteen per cent.

According to Kivioja (2008: 202), the editors of the Finnish tabloids admit that the public discussion of violent tabloid content affected their journalistic policies. Detailed descriptions of violence were intentionally decreased in 2006 after the child ombudsman directed attention to tabloid violence and after a national petition condemning the news reporting of the Jokela school massacre was circulated (Hakala, 2009). The news media monitoring findings (Suikkanen and Syrjälä, 2010: 35) support Kivioja's (ibid.) observations.

Another factor explaining the declining fear levels is the recent development of the media sphere in general. According to Bryant and Zillmann (2009: 16), the traditional mass media have become less important in everyday life compared even with the recent past, replaced in terms of use, perceived value and credibility by more interactive, personalized, mobile media that allow user agency and even user-generated production of content and messages. In other words, since there are no more mass media in the traditional sense (see for example, the Economist, 2011) there are no more mass media effects.

The divergence between the content on the Internet and traditional news content is already visible in Finland. The most significant difference between the two in 2010 was the greater emphasis on accidents and criminal incidents on the Internet (Suikkanen and Syrjälä, 2010). Thus, it appears that crime and violence in particular are topics that have moved from newspapers and television to the Internet.

Changes in individual perception and behaviour

Since fear and insecurities have pervaded our daily existence, fear has become a fact of life (Furedi, 1998). This normalization of fear might have resulted in a state in which people no longer recognize fear or experience it as an emotive state. Moreover, since fear of crime has become institutionalized in both the public and in academic discussions, it is possible that

people have developed new alternative ways to consuming crime in the media. People have perhaps learned even to disregard crime reports in the media if and when necessary. Thus, the media literacy of the Finnish public vis-à-vis crime may have improved in recent years. As a result, the effects of individual media products may have diminished.

The ‘feeling safe by comparison’ thesis (Liska and Baccaglini, 1990; Heath, 1984) concludes that media coverage of serious crimes in places other than the respondents’ living environment do not evoke fear, but instead are interpreted as reassuring, since the threats and risks to their personal lives become less worrying in comparison to the levels of media representations. This thesis might partly explain the decreasing levels of fear, since it is plausible that people have shifted their attention to other news topics and potential indicators of fear, such as panic over food, terrorist attacks and natural disasters instead of crime and violence. Naturally, there is a long history of news reports of these kinds of events, but most threats today are global in nature. They have the potential to affect us, even though they are occurring elsewhere. This development might have diminished fear of crime levels, although at the same time the general insecurities have become stronger.

5 DISCUSSION

My main research objectives in this dissertation have been:

- to explore crime reporting trends in Finnish media,
- to examine the association between violent crime in the news and fear of violence and social trust and
- to study the images of violence and victims of violence on *Poliisi-TV*.

At the level of the sub-studies, this research has provided a series of results that are unprecedented in Finland. Firstly, it was observed that, as in many other countries, the supply of crime news has increased quite markedly in Finland. Secondly, it was verified that exposure to crime news was, at the level of individuals, related to being worried about violent victimization and avoidance behaviour. Thirdly, it was documented that exposure to reality-crime programming in television was associated with reduced social trust among Finnish adolescents. Fourthly, analysis of the Finnish crime-appeal programme *Poliisi-TV* showed that the programme gave a distorted view of crime when compared with primary data sources on crime; however, this distortion was not as great as might be expected from international research findings and epochal theories of sociology. Fifth, the portrayals of victims of violence on *Poliisi-TV* did not fit the traditional ideal types of victims who usually dominate crime reporting in the media. In the following I will draw final conclusions of these results.

5.1 Conclusions

The normalization of victimhood

I have sought to explain the drastic growth in crime reporting that took place in the 1990s by increasing levels of professionalization, by changes in the media sphere and by changes in official communication strategies (section 1.2). These three factors are rather immediate and obvious explanations for the quantitative changes. However, the observed increase in crime reporting also leads to question what kind of *qualitative* changes have occurred.

The saying: ‘If it bleeds, it leads’, has been applied to Finnish media as well, especially in reference to tabloids. Thus, the assumption that the contents of crime news are constantly taking more brutal and sensational forms appears to be global in nature. Although the focus of this research has not been to track down or to verify the qualitative changes that may have occurred in media reporting of crimes, the examinations of the contents of *Poliisi-TV* and victims of violence enable few important conclusions.

First of all, the reporting of violence in Finnish crime-appeal programming is not as brutal and sensational as is often believed to be the case. Yes, we are also still reading and seeing news stories of the unexpected and shocking incidents and we are presented with footage of traditional ideal victims (Christie, 1986), but these are not the typical violence cases that are reported in *Poliisi-TV*. It is possible, even likely, that crime reporting in general in the Finnish media is not particularly distorted and sensational but instead fairly moderate.

Secondly, as previous Finnish research has shown (Mäkipää and Mörä, 2009; Pantti and Sumiala, 2009; Syrjälä, 2007) news reports about violent crimes tend to concentrate more and more on the victims instead of on the perpetrators. In addition, unlike previously, the police and other officials are often absent from the reports. The findings of this research also indicate that the crime victims portrayed in *Poliisi-TV* are more often ordinary people than traditional ‘deserving’ or ‘ideal’ victims. It has also become more common in tabloids to follow individual crimes for a longer period of time (Syrjälä, 2007), making it even easier for the readers to identify with the crime victim.

The fact that the victims of violence in *Poliisi-TV* are middle-aged, middle class ordinary people reflects a recently occurred change in the significance of the crime victim in Finland. Being a victim is nowadays a mundane element of our lives, and since it is okay and even normal to be a crime victim, it is also acceptable to be presented as such in the media. The *Poliisi-TV*’s portrayals are a tangible example of the *normalization of victimhood* (Furedi, 1998), a development that is connected with the wider phenomenon of the emergence of the victim. The findings of this research indicate that this development has penetrated media portrayals of violence in Finland in a similar manner that appears to be the case in some other countries such as the United Kingdom (Garland, 2001) and the United States (Altheide, 2002).

However, as is described in section 1.3, the media portrayals are just one element or side of the emergence of the victim. The contemporary rise of victimhood as a culturally salient frame of interpretation has been a multi-layered and complex process which several factors have contributed.

These factors are partially contingent upon each other, yet they have historically interacted to produce the overall context in which the effects wrought by crime reporting in the media have taken place.

The growing emphasis on victim's rights is seen on the increasing amount of national victim movements. On an international level the same development is seen for example on a recent proposal made by the European Commission (2011) regarding a package of minimum rights for crime victims that would apply throughout the EU. It is likely that these developments bear more positive than negative implications both for individuals and for societies although the overall implications of the emergence of the victim are hard to classify simply as positive or negative.

The emergence of the victim does include potential risks. The changing role of the victim to a consumer, who is encouraged and even expected to buy security devices and services can increase fear and distrust and even lead to a 'culture of fear' (Koskela, 2009). In a similar manner, if the media solely concentrate on describing the suffering of the victim and his or her ordeals and does not reserve any space for background information, it may distort perceptions about criminality.

The media-fear relationship

On the basis of the findings of this research it seems obvious that there are other factors in the fear-media equation that affect both the levels of fear and the reporting of crimes in the media. In this summary I have suggested several such elements, for example: the professionalization of crime journalists, the judicialization of society, economic insecurities, the emergence of the victim and changes in individual perceptions and behaviour of people. Moreover, it is likely that these factors are all interdependent and interacting phenomena, and that no one factor can be used to explain the others.

The final question therefore remains: can the media be blamed for the increase in levels of fear during the 1990s? The answer must be both yes and no. Yes, the media probably did have an effect on public fears, but no, the mechanism was not as straightforward as social scientists and even, on occasion, media representatives themselves have claimed (see Ditton et al., 2004, and Kafatou-Haeusermann, 2007:5). The individual-level findings on the link between media exposure and fear lend plausibility to the aggregate-level claim that the increase in crime reporting contributed to the rise in fear. However, it is obvious that the media impact alone is not sufficient to explain the changes. Instead it is likely that the increasing media cover-

age of crime in the 1990s tapped into an already insecure public atmosphere and reinforced it.

The pitfalls of problem-based research

Much of the inspiration for empirical research into crime reporting in the media has derived from the broader, 'apocalyptic' concerns of subversion or hegemony. Thus, there are two competing anxieties about media images of crime that are reflected in the public discussions as well as in the research literature: the media as fundamentally subversive, and the media as a form of social control. Basically, the first anxiety sees the media as a threat to law, order and morality, whereas the second worries about the exaggerated public alarm over crime cultivated by the media. (Reiner, 2007: 376–77.)

Nabi and Oliver (2009: 2) have stated that one of the strongest motivations for studying the media, namely its great practical appeal, may also serve as its greatest stumbling block. The findings of this research also support the notion that media criminology is in need of a re-orientation in terms of its starting points and objectives. This is because the concern over harmful effects generates excitement for pursuing problem-based research. Indeed, the empirical fact that the media tend to over-emphasize violence at the expense of white-collar crime (Reiner, 2007) appears to override research that seeks to find any positive implications or correlations in crime reporting in the media. Thus, it appears that the dominance of the problem-based paradigm in media criminology sometimes inspires criminologists to over-emphasize the negative aspects of crime in the media. This is not to say that all such claims are merely based on subjective observations or methodologically poor research settings. Instead some such claims are probably believed to be so axiomatic that finding empirical evidence to support them is not even considered necessary.

In comparison to some other countries crime news reporting in Finland is fairly moderate. Still, some scholars (Alvesalo and Korander, 2000: 75) have seen the new entertainment-driven reporting based on global infotainment as a threat to serious journalism in criminal policy issues. On the other hand, never before have there been so many specialized reporters filing news stories about crime and justice (see section 1.2) and never before have there been so many media channels and sources of information from which to choose.

5.2 Research into crime in the media: prospects for the future

The discussion and public concern about violence in the media that centred especially on tabloid newspapers in the beginning of the millennium has recently been shifting more and more to the Internet. In 2005 the Finnish Minister of Culture demanded Internet filters at public libraries and on school computers in order to protect children and teenagers from harmful material. Her initiative was based on the current government platform, which included a paragraph on protecting children from violence in the media (Tulonen, 2005). The goal of censoring harmful material on the Internet was immediately met by strong resistance from various action groups, who claimed the efforts endangered freedom of speech. Slowly, the discussion faded away, probably not because the freedom of speech side won, but because the original idea behind the aim of censoring the contents of the Internet was completely absurd to begin with.

The Internet still appears to be at the centre of the Finnish discussion of violence in the media, not only because of its increasingly important role as a news medium, but also because of the two tragic school shooting incidents in Finland first in Jokela in 2007 and then in Kauhajoki in 2008, resulting in nineteen deaths. The school shootings shifted the focus more to the interactive role of the social media, particularly as both gunmen had produced shooting videos on YouTube prior to committing their crimes. These events have had interesting effects on the research arena, since suddenly it is no longer the 'hegemonic', 'faceless', gigantic media corporations that can be blamed for manipulating and brainwashing the audience and creating fear. Instead threats and dangers are now coming from within our society, and even from within ourselves.

One area of inquiry that is rare in media studies, regardless of the discipline, is investigation into the positive effects of crime in the media.[14] The concentration on the negative effects caused by crime in the media including fear, aggression, criminal behaviour and punitive attitudes, conveys an incomplete picture of how people actually use and perceive the media. I am not claiming that such negative effects are non-existent. Instead, my point is that, according to current research their role and dominance in daily life

[14] However, there are few studies on media's routine activities effects (Messner 1986; Kivivuori 2008: 247; Kivivuori, 2007: 99) that do not treat the media as a negative impact. *The routine activities theory* is based on the notion that if people are increasingly spending time at home using the media, then their likelihood of committing crimes elsewhere is reduced.

is drastically over-stated. While the present research shows that there really are links between exposure to crime in the media and negative outcomes such as fear, avoidance and social distrust, these links are merely individual aspects of the media's role in and impact on society.

It is essential to be cautious about importing claims and interpretations about crime in the media that have been made in other countries to Finland. The domination of British and American research may distort the overall picture of the contents of crime in the media and of media research on a global scale. Moreover, it may confuse scholars themselves into believing that the current situation in their home countries resembles American or British circumstances. Phenomena such as the 'tabloid-free check-outs' movement and the quickly circulated national petition condemning the actions of the media after the Jokela school massacre (Hakala, 2009) are indications of an active public in Finland and also of the fact that the Finnish media tend to listen and correct their actions based on public feedback (Kivioja, 2008).

The idea of the general dumbing-down of the media is slowly eroding as scholars are beginning to recognize positive outcomes of media consumption. For example, Steven Johnson (2006) states, that the beliefs that video games and other forms of popular entertainment are harmful to cognitive and moral development are completely false. He maintains that this notion is merely based on the illogical tendency to assess new cultural products from the standpoint of older products. For example, if books were invented today, they would probably be blamed for causing similar negative consequences than computer games and videogames. (ibid., 31–32.)

In fact, today's consumer of pop-culture has to do more cognitive work than ever before. New leisure-time habits such as role-playing video games and learning to master new virtual environments on the Internet enhance skills such as snap decision-making and the formation of long-term strategies. Evidence of an increase in cognitive skills is seen in the substantial increase in the average scores on intelligence tests all over the world during the last fifty years (Flynn, 2009). Since research has shown that these changes cannot be explained by changes in education levels or nutrition alone, Johnson (ibid.: 148) claims that they must be result of changes in our *cognitive nutrition*, that is the increasing complexity of popular culture.

The tendency to concentrate on the negative implications of crime reporting may be slowly changing along with new forms of media that are rapidly transforming media consumption. The Internet has allowed new providers of news, from individual bloggers to individual websites to rise to prominence in a very short space of time. As The Economist (2011) put

it in their recent report on the future of news: ‘The news agenda is no longer controlled by a few press barons and state outlets, like the BBC’.

But the need to study the positive effects and features of the media is not only a consequence of the new interactive media. Research on positive effects also emerges because the classic ‘dominant ideology’ approach is hardly applicable any longer. Since we are all both producers and consumers of the new media, there are no large hegemonic media corporations to blame for violent or misinforming media contents or effects. Hopefully, this shift will facilitate the re-birth of research into crime in the media in the near future. Future research might, for example, examine whether crime news consumption *decreases* punitive attitudes or fear of crime, what kinds of depictions of crime could create *empathy* with offenders or victims or even how people use aspects of crime news as *entertainment* and sources of *enjoyment.*

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Rikoksista uutisointi lisääntyi voimakkaasti Suomessa 1990-luvulla. Samaan aikaan rikosuhritutkimukset raportoivat voimakkaasta rikoksen pelon noususta. Tämän väitöskirjatutkimuksen ydinkysymyksenä on ollut selvittää, olivatko nämä kaksi ilmiötä; uutisoinnin ja pelon kasvu yhteydessä toisiinsa, ja jos olivat, niin miten.

Väitöskirja koostuu viidestä osatutkimuksesta ja yhteenvetoartikkelista. Ensimmäinen osatutkimus on katsaus rikosuutisoinnin trendeihin Suomessa. Siinä arvioidaan aikaisempaa tutkimusta ja hyödynnetään olemassa olevia aineistoja, joissa on tarkasteltu mediasisältöjä ja rikosuutisoinnin kulutusta. Toinen osatutkimus tarkastelee rikosuutisoinnin yhteyttä rikoksen pelkoon kun henkilökohtaiset ja sijaisuhrikokemukset on vakioitu. Kolmannessa osatutkimuksessa huomion kohteena on rikosuutisoinnin kulutuksen yhteys pelkoon sekä yleiseen sosiaaliseen luottamukseen. Neljännessä osatutkimuksessa tarkastellaan *Poliisi-TV*-ohjelman sisältöjä ja verrataan niiden yhdenmukaisuutta virallisten lähteiden välittämään kuvaan väkivaltarikollisuudesta. Viidennessä osatutkimuksessa kohteena ovat *Poliisi-TV:n* väkivaltauutisten uhrinarratiivit.

Väitöstutkimus raportoi useita Suomen olosuhteissa uusia tuloksia. Ensiksi, kuten monessa muussakin maassa, myös Suomessa rikosuutisoinnin määrä on lisääntynyt merkittävästi 1990-luvun kuluessa. Toiseksi, rikosuutisten kulutus on yhteydessä huoleen väkivallan uhriksi joutumisesta sekä välttämiskäyttäytymiseen. Kolmanneksi, television rikosohjelmien katsominen on yhteydessä alentuneeseen sosiaaliseen luottamukseen. Neljänneksi, *Poliisi-TV* välittää vääristynyttä kuvaa väkivallasta kun sen sisältöjä verrataan poliisitilastoihin ja uhritutkimustietoihin. Nämä vääristymät eivät kuitenkaan ole niin suuria kuin kansainväliset tutkimukset ja sosiologian aikalaisteoriat antavat olettaa. Viidenneksi, uhrien kuvaukset *Poliisi-TV*:ssä ovat ristiriidassa kansainvälisten tutkimustulosten sekä yleisten käsitysten kanssa siitä, miten rikosten uhreja kuvataan mediassa ja keitä he tyypillisimmin ovat.

Väitöstutkimuksen johtopäätös on, että tavallisten ihmisten kuvaaminen väkivallan uhreina *Poliisi-TV*:ssä heijastelee laajempaa rikosuhrin merkitykseen kytkeytyvää kehitystä Suomessa. Tutkimuksessa todetaan myös, että vaikka medialla todennäköisesti oli vaikutusta rikoksen pelon kasvuun 1990-luvulla, mekanismi ei ollut niin yksiselitteinen kuin usein on esitetty. Todennäköisesti lukuisat muut tekijät vaikuttivat sekä pelkojen että rikosuutisoinnin kasvuun. Nämä tekijät ovat oletettavasti luonteeltaan interaktiivisia. Lopuksi tutkimus peräänkuuluttaa suunnanmuutosta mediakriminologian kysymyksenasetteluihin ja ehdottaa, että rikosmedian positiivisia vaikutuksia tutkittaisiin nykyistä enemmän.

Avainsanat: media, rikoksen pelko, väkivalta, rikosuutisointi

ABSTRACT

Finland witnessed a surge in crime news reporting during the 1990s. At the same time, there was a significant rise in the levels of fear of crime reported by surveys. This research examines whether and how the two phenomena: news media and fear of violence were associated with each other.

The dissertation consists of five sub-studies and a summary article. The first sub-study is a review of crime reporting trends in Finland, in which I have reviewed prior research and used existing Finnish datasets on media contents and crime news media exposure. The second study examines the association between crime media consumption and fear of crime when personal and vicarious victimization experiences have been held constant. Apart from analyzing the impact of crime news consumption on fear, media effects on general social trust are analyzed in the third sub-study. In the fourth sub-study I have analyzed the contents of the Finnish *Poliisi-TV* programme and compared the consistency of the picture of violent crime between official data sources and the programme. In the fifth and final sub-study, the victim narratives of *Poliisi-TV's* violence news contents have been analyzed.

The research provides a series of results which are unprecedented in Finland. First, it observes that as in many other countries, the quantity of crime news supply has increased quite markedly in Finland. Second, it verifies that exposure to crime news is related to being worried about violent victimization and avoidance behaviour. Third, it documents that exposure to TV crime reality-programming is associated with reduced social trust among Finnish adolescents. Fourth, the analysis of *Poliisi-TV* shows that it transmits a distorted view of crime when contrasted with primary data sources on crime, but that this distortion is not as big as could be expected from international research findings and epochal theories of sociology. Fifth, the portrayals of violence victims in *Poliisi-TV* do not fit the traditional ideal types of victims that are usually seen to dominate crime media.

The fact that the victims of violence in *Poliisi-TV* are ordinary people represents a wider development of the changing significance of the crime victim in Finland. The research concludes that although the media most likely did have an effect on the rising public fears in the 1990s, the mechanism was not as straight forward as has often been claimed. It is likely that there are other factors in the fear-media equation that are affecting both fear levels and crime reporting and that these factors are interactive in nature. Finally, the research calls for a reorientation of media criminology and suggests more emphasis on the positive implications of crime in the media.

Keywords: crime, media, fear of crime, violence, victimization, news

ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

I

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Crime News Trends in Finland: A Review of Recent Research

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Abstract

In this article, we present findings of crime media research conducted in Finland during recent years. As this body of research has mainly been published in Finnish, the core results have not been available for international audiences until now. The amount of crime news reporting has consistently increased both in the newspapers and in television news broadcasts during the last decades. A series of representative surveys also show that the majority of people read and view crime news on a regular basis and are thus constantly exposed to these media messages. We conclude our article by contrasting crime news trends with the development of fear of crime in Finland, and by discussing possible links and explanations to the relationship.

KEY WORDS: Crime news, Fear of crime, Trends, Violence

Introduction

The front pages and ads for two national tabloids can be found on the walls of every kiosk and at all supermarket check-outs in Finland. In summer 2003, the following letter was published in the largest daily broadsheet newspaper of Finland:

> Recently I witnessed the following incident: a small girl, about ten years old was standing in front of a kiosk. She looked confused, anxious and fearful. The reason for this was obvious. She was looking at the yellow tabloid front pages that were hanging on the kiosk wall. The upper one was advertising a story of a 'chopper killer', the one below had written in colossal letters 'man sawed wife in half'. … It is completely unnecessary that children involuntarily have to face the sickening reality-violence of the tabloids. It's more traumatizing than fictional violence. As a parent I can decide for my children what sort of television programmes they are watching or what kind of computer games they are playing. However, I have no means to prevent my children from ending up as victims of the emotional violence of the tabloids. (Letters to the Editor, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 8 June 2003)

In spring 2006, the Finnish ombudsman for children, an independent authority monitoring the welfare of children, raised the question of brutalizing and fear-evoking tabloid front pages and ads. The ombudsman said her initiative was motivated by parents complaining about extremely brutal tabloid ads. The Minister of Culture joined the critics in demanding 'tabloid-free check-outs' to be created in supermarkets, so that parents shopping with children could choose such a check-out to pay for the groceries. An acrimonious debate ensued as the media, as was to be expected, raised the banner of free expression and freedom of the

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press. Possibly largely due to the avalanche of public criticism and earlier independent research, media corporations even started to finance research on crime news themselves.

A couple of years before the above-described public debate, the National Research Institute of Legal Policy had initiated a research programme on crime reporting in the media. This project presaged the present debate and, with the first the report in 2002, triggered a somewhat similar debate on a smaller scale. The basic motivation of the project was the observation that during the period 1988–1997 fear of crime increased quite drastically in Finland. At the same time, national victimization surveys indicated that the level of violent victimization remained very stable. As researchers we hypothesized that some other factor than criminal behaviour must have accounted for the rise in fear. There were of course several important factors. First, a deep economic recession took place in Finland in the early 1990s and resulted in mass unemployment. This shock coincided with a marked cultural and ethnic pluralization of the country. Third, there were demographic factors such as changes in age structure of the population (more elderly people, fewer young people) and the internal migration from rural to urban areas. Fourth, the disintegration of the Soviet Union might have resulted in rising fears of Eastern crime. Also, in 1995 Finland became a member of the EU, which opened up the borders more to the West as well. And then there were the media. At the very outset, there appeared to be a lack of information about the quantitative trends of crime reporting.

Considerations such as the rise of the crime problem in the national political agenda and concerns about increasing fears have inspired not only heated debates but also a series of research studies on the crime news reporting in Finland. So far, this interesting body of research has been published almost exclusively in Finnish. The main purpose of this article is to *review* these studies so that their core results would be available for larger audience. In this article, we present studies which have sought to describe quantitatively the trends of crime news reporting in Finland over the recent decades and years. We then conclude with an analysis contrasting crime-reporting trends with the development of fear of crime in Finland. Finally, we discuss future research needs in this area.

Why study crime media?

The media are often claimed to be one central factor affecting perceptions of crime and increasing levels of fear. It has been noted in several studies that the media present crime in ways that selectively distort and manipulate public perceptions by creating a false picture of crime. This in turn promotes stereotyping, bias, prejudice, and gross oversimplification of criminality (Schlesinger et al. 1991; Williams and Dickinson 1993; Warr 2000; Eschholz et al. 2003). Although it is extremely difficult to isolate a specific media effect in a world that is increasingly characterized as 'media-saturated', the hypothesis that the media play some part in the distribution of fear of crime cannot be neglected (Jewkes 2004:143).

Crime news reporting has increased in several Western countries during the last century. For example, in a study covering 300 years, Davis and McLeod (2003) observed that violence slowly rose to its present predominance as the number-one sensational news topic in various parts of the world. The manner of portraying crime and criminality seems to have changed as well. The recent developments in changing media representations have often been referred to with the terms emotivism and tabloidization (Sparks and Tulloch 2000). The concept refers to a shift to more entertainment-oriented content in news reporting. As a concrete example of this development David Garland (2001:144) has claimed that the crime victim is no longer presented as an unfortunate citizen. Neither are his or her concerns any more subsumed within the 'public interest' that guides prosecution and penal decisions. Instead, the crime victim is now a representative character whose experience is assumed to be common and collective, rather than individual and atypical. The victim's suffering which is presented in the media speaks directly to the fears and angers of the viewing public, producing effects of identification and reinforcement that are then turned to political and commercial use.

It is important to know how crime news reporting develops over time. Expanding crime media can trigger moral emotions in the absence of unmediated crime experiences, so that people's moral emotions 'run wild'. Moral emotions refer to feelings like anger, shame, vengefulness, and forgiveness. Such feelings are aroused when people witness or experience breaches of social norms, rights, and trust, crime being an important subcategory of such breaches (Takala 1999; Carvalho and Lewis 2003).

Media images and the politicization of penal policy

The media and the criminal justice system set the agenda for public debate about crime and the implementation of criminal justice. In recent years the focus of media discussion on criminality, particularly in the UK and in the United States, has shifted towards an understanding of criminality as a 'normal fact of life' where victimization avoidance and crime prevention have become major themes. This, in turn, has become one of the main discussion topics in control policy; *crime consciousness* has spread and become institutionalized in policy discussions, in the media, and in the popular culture (Garland and Sparks 2000).

As the power of penal elites may have once damped the more punitive and populist voices, the composition of the criminal political field has changed. These changes are most dramatic in the English-speaking countries. However, similar but smaller-scale changes have taken place also in the Nordic countries and in Eastern Europe (Tonry and Frase 2001). In Nordic countries the social welfare model of crime reduction which is positively related with feelings of security appears to be losing ground to the penal code model (Lappi-Seppälä 2003; Balvig 2004). Key persons have changed, and new interest groups have emerged into the criminal political field. Moreover, the growing international aspect of crime and crime control, the

increased pressure on the harmonization of criminal law within the European Union, as well as the general tendency to politicize criminal policy all point towards increased repression in EU member states (Nuotio 2005).

Nordic research on crime media

A large amount of the empirical research on crime media has been conducted either in the United States or in the United Kingdom, both countries with substantially different media environments compared to the Nordic countries. First, television is a far less popular medium in the Nordic countries when measured by hours of viewing (Finnpanel 2008; Nielsen Media Research Reports 2008) or by the number of free-of-charge television channels. Secondly, in the Nordic countries it is typical to subscribe to the daily newspaper instead of purchasing the paper from kiosks or news-stands which is common in many other Western states. According to the Finnish Newspapers Association (2008), Norway, Finland, and Sweden are among the top five countries in the world in newspaper circulation rates. Hence, it can be argued that the Nordic peoples as media consumers are more 'readers' than 'viewers' compared with the Americans and the British. Therefore, it is not only essential to avoid generalizing Anglo-Saxon research findings of media contents and consumption but to also bear in mind the dominant role of printed media in the Nordic countries.

In Finland, as well as in other Nordic countries, the trends, contents, and reception of violence in non-fictional media have been studied to a rather small extent, although some studies on the topics have been conducted. Ester Pollack's (2001) longitudinal study of Swedish crime journalism covering the period 1915–1955 revealed that the crimes in the media varied over time in a way that could not be explained by crime trends. Two other Swedish studies have confirmed the notion that the proportions of different crimes presented in the media do not reflect the actual levels of crime as pictured in crime statistics (Estrada 1999; Dahlquist 2000).

Malin Åkerström's (1998) study on tabloid front pages was consistent with these findings but noticed in addition that the increase in violent media content was neither reflected in increasing victimization experiences or in rising levels of fear. Instead, the interviewed people stated others to be more afraid than they themselves claimed to be. The finding could be explained either by the fact that only few people have personal experience of crime, or, as Åkerström (1998) put it, that the society's climate of opinion generates topics (such as crime) that are functional for the current social conversation. Anita Heber's (2007) study on Swedish newspapers showed that the press over-exaggerates both the amount of crime as well as the proportion of violent crime. The papers also depict ordinary people as fearful and as believing levels of fear to be increasing.

Crime reporting in Finland

The present decade has witnessed a veritable flood of research in tabloid crime news reporting. The pattern is interesting as such: in the first phase, independent researchers started to count the incidence of tabloid topics. They were then followed by journalists producing academic theses and media researchers financed by

Finland's biggest news corporation SanomaWSOY (the publisher of one of the two national tabloids). This statement is not to disparage or doubt the integrity of corporation-financed research. Indeed, its results have so far replicated and verified the earlier findings of independent research, making the tabloid crime news (perhaps ironically) one of the most thoroughly examined topics in Finnish social science. This fact probably reflects the debates triggered by the skyrocketing violence representations in tabloid press, and the attempts by the media corporations to manage their public image in the face of public criticism. Researchers have been far less interested in studying the contents of broadsheet newspapers. However, Sari Kemppi's (2003) study on broadsheet editorials showed that, although the editorials rarely commented on crime-related topics, a very gradual increase in crime-related material was detected during 1980–2000.

Tabloids

There are two tabloids in Finland: *Ilta-Sanomat* and *Iltalehti*. The former is published by SanomaWSOY, the leading newspaper publisher in Finland, which also owns the commercial TV channels Nelonen, JIM, and Urheilukanava, as well as some pay-to-watch TV channels. The latter tabloid is published by Alma Media, whose other publications include Finland's second largest newspaper, *Aamulehti*. Both tabloids are published six times a week, are among the five largest newspapers in Finland when measured by circulation (Finnish Audit Bureau of Circulations 2008b), and have a wide range of readers among both sexes and in all age categories (Finnish Audit Bureau of Circulations 2008a).

In 2002, Tapani Huovila published a study on the contents of Finnish tabloid ads in 1994 and 2000. Besides crime reporting, he explored other topics as well and presented information on the proportion of violent, criminal, and accident news on the ads. The findings indicated that in both tabloids the reporting of violence, crimes, and accidents increased during 1994 and 2000. Especially the other tabloid, *Ilta-Sanomat*, increased this kind of reporting. Huovila (2002) stated that main topics for both tabloids appear to be celebrities, violence, crimes and accidents.

In research on Finnish tabloids (Kivivuori et al. 2002) the primary aim was to produce descriptive data on the intensity of violence reporting in the Finnish tabloid press and to develop a standardized model of content analysis for the purpose of measuring the violence reporting of the press. Secondly, the project produced a coding manual which will be used in the context of future national crime victimization studies. In other words, the idea was to develop a relatively simple, standard content analysis manual for the purpose of measuring the intensity of violence reporting.

The years 1980[1], 1988, 1993, and 1997 were analysed because the Finnish national victimization surveys were conducted in those years, creating the possibility of comparing tabloid violence trends with actual risk of victimization and (from 1988) fear of violence. Additionally, the year 2000 was analysed, and later on the data was supplemented with a six-month period

[1] *Iltalehti* was launched on 1 October 1980. Its first year of publication stands for the observation '1980'.

of 2003. The research design of the study, especially the selection of the observation years, was based on the intent to compare violence-reporting trends with trends of violent victimization and fear of violence in the general population. In the analysis, the front-page headlines were classified into two groups: main headlines and other headlines. There can be only one main headline per issue, while each front page may contain several other headlines.

The main analytic phase was to include all headlines that reported some kind of real violence. Only intentional non-fictional criminal violence was included. Accidents, war-related violence, and repressive violence by various governments against their own citizens were excluded. The included headlines were thus about murders, manslaughter, assaults, fist-fights, robberies, hostage-taking, and intentional threats of violence. All attempts at intentional violence were also included (for example, trying to shoot or hit someone and missing). Headlines reporting intentional harassment and bullying were also included, because it turned out that the line between these and threats of violence was difficult to define. In most analyses, only headlines which describe Finnish violence were included. This was because one of the aims of the study was to compare the headline trends with the trends of real violence and fear of violence in Finland. All findings reported in this article are restricted to headlines that describe Finnish violence. In Figure 1, basic findings are reported as rates of violence-reporting headlines per 100 annual issues. Rates are shown, mainly because there was a press strike in 1980 so that during 1980 fewer issues were released.

The intensity of violence reporting increased quite drastically between the years 1988 and 1993. Main headlines describing violence increased in a relatively stable manner during 1980–1997. The observation of 2000 suggested that the increase was saturating, but our most recent observation (2003) indicated that the amount of violence reporting is still growing. This notion is also backed up by Hanna Syrjälä's more recent study on the violent contents of tabloid ads (2007).

Pasi Kivioja (2004), a journalist at *Ilta-Sanomat*, explored the circulation history of Finnish tabloids. His main interest was to examine what kind of news sell and why. He also explored in more detail the news topics of *Ilta-Sanomat* in 2002. The main findings of his study indicated that two of the best-selling news topics are celebrities and crimes. In many cases these two topics are also combined (e.g. violent acts committed by a celebrity). In the year 2002 a good tabloid ad increased sales by 50% in some extreme cases. Unsuccessful ads on the other hand decreased the sales rates at most by 10%–14%. On the best selling days both the tabloid ad and the coverage contained the same dramatic main news headline. Sales increased also on days when both tabloids (*Ilta-lehti* and *Ilta-Sanomat*) had the same main headlines. Most recently, Hanna Syrjälä studied the violence-reporting trend in tabloid ads (2007). Her study by and large corroborated the earlier findings made by Huovila (2002) and Kivivuori et al. (2002).

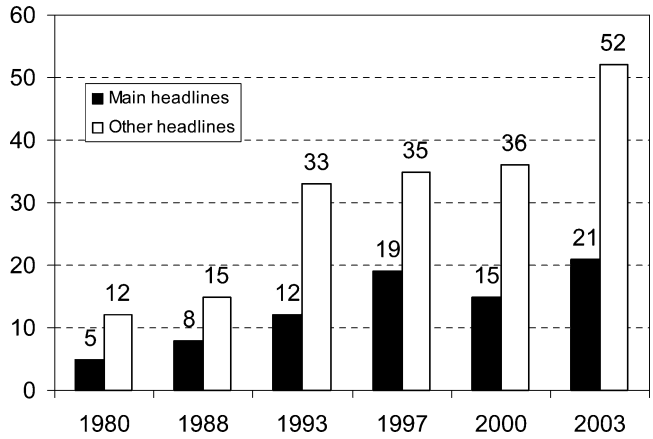

Figure 1. *Headlines reporting violence in the front pages of Finnish tabloid newspapers per 100 issues in each year (the figures for year 2003 are based on a 6-month period (1 October 2002 to 31 March 2003) gathered after the reporting of the study 'Front-page violence' (Kivivuori et al. 2002))*

In her study of tabloid homicide reporting 1980–2000, Leena Mäkipää (2004) posed a slightly different question. Her main objective was to portray the qualitative changes that had taken place in crime reporting during this time-period. According to her findings, homicide reporting has indeed changed radically. Compared to the reporting in the 1980s there appears to be a shift to a more subjective perspective in the reporting at the beginning of the new millennium. Homicide reporting has become more sentimental, and it appeals more and more to the subjective experiences of lay people. Also the consequences of a homicide, such as grief and shock, are stressed in the reporting to a much larger extent than before. In practice this is done by including more interviews with ordinary people in the stories instead of presenting view-points only from the police or other authorities, which was common in the 1980s.

Local press

The analyses of national tabloids and television overlook an important aspect of crime reporting, namely its locality. In Finland, the local press is a traditional and flourishing institution. In a recent study, this aspect was examined in a descriptive manner (Hagerlund 2005). The study was based on a survey of the editors of the local newspapers. Of the 242 editors targeted, 121 responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of exactly 50%.

The basic finding was that crime reporting is quite prevalent in the local newspapers, which mainly report about local crimes. The editors were asked how many crime stories were included in an average issue during the year 2004. For example, 19% of the editors reported that an average issue included at least five stories about traffic offences, while in 40% of the newspapers an average issue included two to four traffic offence stories, and 23% reported one

traffic offence in an average issue (Figure 2). This means that 82% of the Finnish local newspapers contain traffic offence-related material in an average issue. Car theft was also a very prevalent news topic: 75% of the newspapers reported that an average issue contained at least one story about auto theft. For breaking and entering, the corresponding figure was 73%. Of the specific crime types listed in the questionnaire, economic crimes were regularly covered by only 27% of the newspapers.

By multiplying the number of crime stories in an average issue by the number of annual issues, it was possible to calculate roughly how many crimes were reported by the Finnish local press in 2004. This estimate is necessarily tentative, for example because different local papers can report about the same incidents. However, when compared with the number of crimes reported to the police, it seems that the coverage of local press was greatest for auto theft, breaking and entering, and violence, and least for traffic offences and thefts.

One of the aims of the local press study was to examine whether crime news reporting has increased, or is increasing, in the local media. A cross-sectional survey cannot yield similar trend descriptions as in the above-reviewed content analyses of national tabloids and news broadcasts. However, the local study used the editors as informants. They were asked how they saw the trends in the local press. They were first asked, 'has the number of crime stories changed in your newspaper

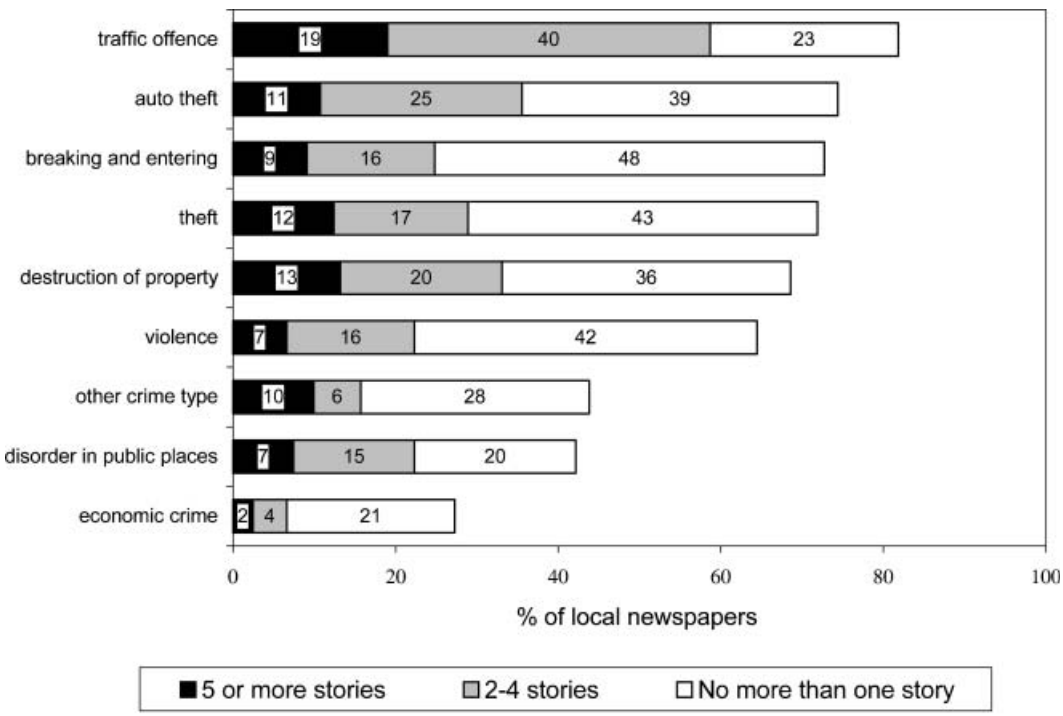

Figure 2. *Crime-reporting intensity in an average issue by crime type, % of local newspapers, Finland 2004.*

during the last five years, that is, in the period 2000–2004?'. A total of 50% of the editors estimated that the number of crime news had remained stable, while 35% reported that the number of crime stories had increased during the present decade. Only 7% estimated that the intensity of crime reporting had decreased.

The respondents were then asked whether the number of crime stories had changed generally in the local press. These estimates suggested a stronger emphasis on increasing crime coverage. The majority of editors (58%) reported that crime news had increased, while one-third (33%) of respondents described the scene as stable. Only 2% reported that in their opinion the overall crime-reporting intensity of the local press had decreased. Taken together, these results suggest that crime news increased in the Finnish local press in the early part of the present decade. Interestingly, the editors were more prone to detecting increasing crime news volumes generally than in their own newspapers.

Television

There are four state-owned television channels in Finland: YLE1, YLE2, YLE Teema, and FST5, of which the latter one is targeted to the Swedish-speaking population. In addition there are seven free-of-charge commercial channels: MTV3, Nelonen, Sub, JIM, Urheilukanava, The Voice, and TV Viisi.

In recent research (Kemppi and Kivivuori 2004) the aim was to investigate the quantitative trends of crime reporting in the Finnish television's prime-time news. More specifically, the prime-time news broadcast of the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) was examined for the period between 1985 and 2003. The YLE is one of the most prestigious news organizations in Finland, and its 'half past eight news' broadcast consistently scores highest levels of trust among the Finnish television viewers.

The period 1985–2003 was characterized by a significant increase in crime-related topics in this news programme (Figure 3). The percentage of daily broadcasts containing crime or crime control-related subject matter rose from 19% to 42%. The sharpest increase took place in the mid 1990s. All types of crime were increasingly reported, and especially violence and drugs-related news increased. Reporting about crime control, especially related to police activities, increased at a slower pace.

The increase in crime news in YLE's main news broadcast reflects several factors. First, this period is characterized by major changes in the organization of YLE's news staff, culminating in the creation of positions dedicated specifically to crime reporting. Second, crime reporters have established close ties with sources of crime information, and the new demand for crime news was met by increasingly active news feeds from the police (Kemppi and Kivivuori 2004:20). Third, the launching of the first Finnish reality crime TV programme (Poliisi-TV) in 1989 has amplified the presence of this subject matter in the media, including prime-time news. And fourth, these changes in the media market have coincided with changes in the Finnish crime problem, specifically the emergence of international organized crime and drug trafficking.

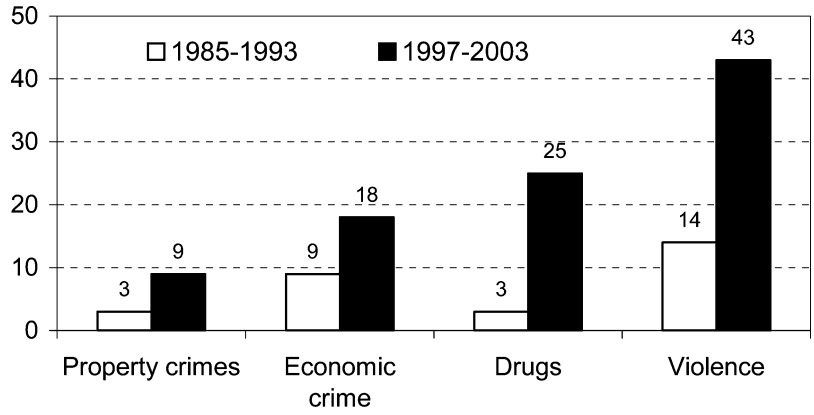

Figure 3. *Average number of days per year when a crime-related topic was broadcast in the main news broadcast of the Finnish public television (YLE); years 1985, 1988, 1993 and 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006.*

As verified above, crime reporting in Finland has increased both in newspapers and in television news broadcasts during the last decades. Thus, the question remains: do people expose themselves to these messages? In this section, we summarize briefly some basic findings about the actual self-reported reception prevalence of crime news reporting.

Exposure to crime news

Media-effect debates have traditionally revolved around two principal axes: firstly the notion that deviance presented in the media causes deviant behaviour in society, and secondly that fear of crime is cultivated by excessive consumption of crime coverage in the media (Leishman and Mason 2003:18). The most popular 'cause' and 'effect' models utilized in social sciences are *the hypodermic model* and *the cultivation model*. The former assumes that a simple injection of media messages results in a quick fix that affects attitudes and actions, and the latter that extensive exposure to media-reconstructed realities over a long time-period can result in perceptions of reality that are very different from what they might be if people watched less television or read less newspapers (Gerbner 1998).

However, as Leishman and Mason (2003:19) point out, the massive amount of research evidence over the years does not permit such simplified conclusions of media effects. Especially studies on mass media effects on fear of crime point to a complex relationship, which must take into account a variety of variables, including the medium, the type of programme involved, and the nature of the audience. Differential reading and viewing habits must also be acknowledged, as well as the direction of the possible causal relationship (e.g. do more fearful people read or watch more?). The *uses and gratifications approach* assumes that viewers actively choose programmes or other media content to gratify their individual needs. The tradition is based on the notion that individual differences among audience members cause each person to seek out different messages, use those messages differently, and to respond to them

differently because media contents are but one of many social or psychological factors that cause audience members to select different media fare (Bryant and Thompson 2002:127–8).

In 2002–2004, questions about crime news exposure were added to several survey research projects, such as the Mare Balticum youth victimization survey, National Crime Victimization Survey, and the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study. Table 1 shows the targeted groups, the questions used, and the basic prevalence levels in the population. For example, 72% of adult Finns report reading tabloid ads regularly, and 35% regard tabloids as important sources of crime-related information. Young people are also avid readers of tabloid ads posted daily in public places, and a significant segment of adolescents also watch crime reality TV shows.

Naturally the figures reported in Table 1 do not tell how people interpret, receive, or use the messages. The reception can be critical or jocular as well as fearful or fact-seeking. However, the findings underline the fact that crime is currently an integral topic in the media that not only interests people but is also impossible to avoid.

Comparing violence-reporting trends with reality and fears

Figure 4 contrasts violence and crime reporting in tabloids (Kivivuori et al. 2002) and in prime-time news (Kemppi and Kivivuori 2004) with the prevalence of violent victimization and fear of violence in the population. During the period 1980–1997, the percentage of people who were victimized or threatened with violence remained relatively stable. At the same time, the percentage of people fearing violence increased. Both prime-time news reporting and tabloid front-page reporting increased the amount of violence and crime as news topics.

The violent victimization time series includes people who have been threatened with violence. If only violence that resulted in physical injury is examined, the percentage of victims, and the number of violent incidents, actually decreased during the period 1980–1997. Violence-reporting trends and trends of real violence in society are thus highly divergent.

The main finding from Figure 4 is that the intensity of the reporting has increased quite drastically both in tabloids and in prime-time television news at least until 2003. As indicated by large-scale national crime victimization surveys, there were no increases in the levels of violent victimization. The number of violent incidents actually decreased during the period 1980–1997. During that period, increasing violence reporting was thus neither preceded nor associated with any increase in the factual incidence of violence in the Finnish population. The period 1988–1997 witnessed a marked increase in fear of violence. Of course, this observation does not necessarily mean that crime reporting caused the increase of fear. However, we can say that both violence and crime reporting and fear of crime increased significantly and independently of real violent victimization in the Finnish society.

The most recent national victimization surveys (2003 and 2006) indicate that fear of crime is decreasing. The fear trend has diverged from the crime news

Table 1. *Selected survey results on self-reported exposure to crime news*

Study	Age group	Exposure type	Prevalence
National Victimization Survey 2003	15–74	Reads tabloid ads regularly or often	72%
National Victimization Survey 2003	15–74	Tabloids are very/fairly important as crime information source for the respondent	35%
Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study 2004	15–16	Reads newspaper crime reports at least sometimes	27%
Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study 2004	15–16	Watches crime reality TV at least sometimes	39%
Mare Balticum Youth Victimization Survey [a] 2002/2003	15–16	Watches crime reality TV at least once in a 2-week period	45%
Mare Balticum Youth Victimization Survey 2002/2003	15–16	Reads tabloid ads fairly often or regularly	70%

[a]This survey project was directed by Greifswald University, Germany. Questions on crime reality TV and tabloid exposure were included in the study by Finnish researchers. The Mare Balticum survey took place in Helsinki. The other surveys shown in this table were nationally representative.

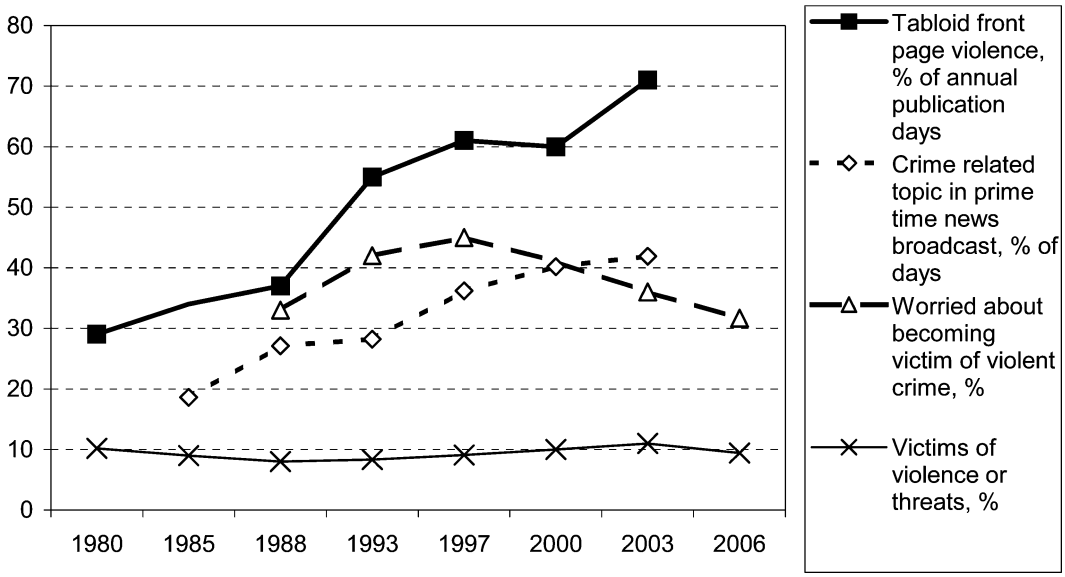

Figure 4. *Days on which violence was reported on the front page of at least one of the two tabloids (% of annual publication days), annual frequency of prime time news broadcasts featuring a crime related topic, people who fear violence (% of adult population) and victims of violence or violent threats (% of adult population) (the figures for the year 2000 have been interpolated from the figures of 1997 and 2003 regarding victimization and fear).*

trend. There are various possible explanations for this development. First, it is possible that the massive increase in crime reporting has resulted in *desensitization* in the Finnish audience. That is, that the constantly growing amount of violent news in the media has made this news topic in a sense an ordinary and mundane fact of social life, which no longer triggers strong emotions (e.g. anger, fear).

Second, it is conceivable that increasing crime reporting has in fact made people less fearful, since the threats and risks of their personal life have become less worrying compared to the received media representations of violent acts. Two studies on crime-reporting effects on fear (Heath 1984; Liska and Baccaglini 1990) have noted that the number of crime stories is not as powerful predictor for levels of fear as the place where the reported crime has occurred. However, the *feeling safe by comparison* (Liska and Baccaglini 1990) hypothesis cannot be utilized validly on the findings presented in this article since the proportion of violence reporting where the location was abroad was noteworthily smaller than that of domestic reports. Nor were there any significant changes in the proportions during the examined period (Kivivuori et al. 2002:55).

Third, it might be that people have shifted their attention to other news topics and potential sources of fear, such as food panics, wars, and natural disasters. As Finland is widely recognized as a very safe society, lacking terrorism and with a low level of organized crime, news reports about terrorist acts in Europe, global health epidemics (bird influenza), natural disasters (earthquakes, floods), and wars may have indirectly diminished the fear of crime by channelling anxieties towards other uncertainties and perceived risks. Ironically enough, levels of fear could be decreasing because there are far more threatening issues to worry about than crime in contemporary societies.

Fourth, the closely parallel trends of crime news reporting and crime fears in the 1990s may have depended on an interaction effect with economic recession and mass unemployment. It is known that unemployment is an independent predictor of crime fears at least in Finland (Smolej and Kivivuori 2006), which is why it is plausible to suggest that the increase of crime fears reflected the simultaneous rise of crime news reporting and unemployment. When economic recession ended, the rise of crime news was unable to 'support' crime fears by itself, a turn of events resulting in the present scene of decreasing fear and stable crime news reporting.

Discussion

In this article, we have reviewed recent Finnish quantitative research on the trends of crime news reporting in the media. The overall picture is one of rather striking and consistent increase in the non-fictional portrayal of crime, especially violence (Table 2).

This trend is most drastic in tabloid front-page headlines and ads, but serious news operators such as the highly respected Finnish Broadcasting Corporation (YLE) do not seem to be exempt from the rise of the crime topic on the agenda. The local press also partakes

Table 2. *Summary of crime news-reporting trends in the Finnish media as revealed by recent quantitative content analyses*

	Period	Trend	Study	Method
Broadsheet editorials	1980–2000	Stable/slow increase	Kemppi 2004	QCA
Tabloid headlines	1980–2003	Increase	Kivivuori et al. 2002	QCA
Tabloid ads	1980–2006	Increase	Syrjälä 2007	QCA
Local press	2000–2004	Moderate increase	Hagerlund 2005	Survey (editors)
TV prime time news broadcast	1985–2003	Increase	Kemppi and Kivivuori 2004	QCA (transcripts)

QCA=quantitative content analysis.

in the general trend. The only exception to this rather uniform picture seems to be the editorials of serious broadsheet newspapers. The editorials also increasingly comment on crime and crime control, but the increase is very modest.

We also know from a series of representative surveys that a great number of people actually read and 'use' crime news reporting (Table 1). In what follows, we discuss some ramifications and possible consequences of these trends of increasing crime reporting and massive reception impact.

In international comparison, fear of crime levels in Finland and in all Nordic countries is low (European Opinion Research Group 2003; Alvazzi del Frate and Van Kesteren 2004). Most often this has been explained by the effect of the Nordic welfare state model, characterized by the principle of universality and the promotion of income redistribution and social equity (Esping-Andersen 1990). It is also known that the level of general interpersonal trust tends to be high in Nordic welfare state regimes (Kääriäinen and Lehtonen 2006). From this point of view, it is alarming that exposure to crime news is also related to decreasing levels of interpersonal trust (Salmi et al. 2007). In a worst-case scenario, the rise of crime news reporting will erode social trust and therefore also the cultural foundations of democracy. However, we wish to underscore that the link between crime news exposure and low trust may be a selection effect (people whose interpersonal trust has eroded for other reasons may self-select themselves to watch crime news reporting), so that crime news cannot be 'blamed' for the trust deficits of individual people.

There are also notable differences in the organization of the political systems between 'fearless' and 'fearful' countries. Countries with two-party systems (e.g. United Kingdom, United States) where two major political parties dominate the voting in elections have been claimed to be conducive to extremist politics and ideologies which are reflected in decisions regarding criminal policy issues. Implications on criminal policy include programmes and slogans such as 'prison

works', 'war on drugs', and 'zero tolerance' that tend to find solutions to social problems in places where they cannot be found, that is, in the penal system (Garland 2001; see also Lappi-Seppälä 2002). In the Finnish multi-party system the pressure for this kind of juxtaposition is a lot weaker. In fact, crime control has never been a central political issue in election campaigns in Finland, and in general also the media have retained a sober and reasonable attitude towards criminal policy issues instead of resorting to low-level populism. Undoubtedly the fact that the largest newspapers are politically independent unlike in some other countries plays a crucial part in this phenomenon as well.

Fear of crime, or other emotions triggered by crime, cannot be explained solely by media effects. In fact, there appears to be large individual differences also in reactions to crime as well as in definitions and expressions of fear (Heber 2007). The media–fear relationship is a complex one with various elements having effect in certain settings and under certain conditions. However, since the most consistent finding across media and across time is the gross distortion of the types of crime reported in the news and the ever-expanding amount of crime news, there are well grounded reasons to argue that the media profoundly misinform the public. If people largely rely on news for their knowledge of criminality and take the crime coverage at face value, they are accepting a serious distortion. They are likely to believe that a typical crime is extremely violent and that crime is constantly increasing. This is one major reason why criminologists should not neglect research on crime media.

People's behaviour is often goal-oriented when they select media fare. Their selections are based on the information or satisfaction they anticipate that they will receive by viewing a certain programme or selecting a certain magazine. Individual differences among audience members cause each person to seek out different messages, use those messages differently, and to respond to them differently because messages from mass media are but one of many social or psychological factors that cause audience members to select different media fare. (Bryant and Thompson 2002:127–8.) This point of departure should be acknowledged to a larger extent in future research by linking media uses and effects.

Research should ask what effects particular gratifications may have, or what effects particular uses of the media may have. People depend upon the media to fulfil certain needs, such as vicarious experience and escapism, involvement and interaction (Bryant and Thompson 2002:132). While it is still important to study the direct effects of mass media on audience members, future studies should also explore the motivations and behaviour of viewers/readers, and how and why they use the media. There are undoubtedly individual differences in tendencies to experience fear that cannot be explained either by variations in socio-demographic traits or by media consumption. In order to access these factors, psychological elements as well as interaction effects should be taken into account. Several theories concerning media effects deal particularly with interaction effects. For example, the finding that there is 1) an

individual-level association between crime news exposure and fear while 2) aggregate-level trends of fear and crime news prevalence are uncorrelated, may be explained by various subgroups of people reacting differentially to the avalanche of crime-related materials. In the future, researchers should also directly address the question whether crime news exposure is associated, or even causally implicated, with repressive or punitive attitudes. This link should be studied by both qualitative and quantitative means.

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The Relation Between Crime News and Fear of Violence

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Abstract

In this article, we explore the relationship between the use of crime news and fear of violence through multivariate analyses. Our main objective is to examine whether exposure to crime news is related to avoidance behaviour and fear of crime when personal and vicarious victimization experiences, as well as a number of other relevant factors, are held constant. Using the 2003 sweep of the Finnish National Victimization Surveys, we focus on two types of crime news exposure: exposure to crime-related tabloid headlines, and the scope of exposure to different sources of crime news. Our main finding is that reading tabloid front pages is associated with both avoidance behaviour and with higher levels of worry about becoming a victim of violence. We also found that people who expose themselves to many sources of crime news are more likely to fear violence. As an interesting by-product of our analyses, we observed that being unemployed was quite strongly associated with fear of violence.

KEY WORDS: Crime news, Fear of crime, Media exposure, Victimization, Violence

It has been noted in several studies that media representations of crime do not correspond with actual levels of crime in society. The media emphasizes crimes of violence whereas other types of crime such as property crimes are underrepresented (Surette 2002). During many historical periods the quantitative development of crime news has been different from the criminality experienced by the public. It has often been the case that crime reporting has increased while the actual level of criminality and victimization has remained stable (Reiner et al. 2003). In Finland reporting on violence in the tabloids and in television news increased massively during 1980–1997 although, at the same time, there were not any drastic changes in the amount of experienced violence (Kivivuori et al. 2002; Kemppi and Kivivuori 2004).

The reporting on crimes in the news media has grown in several other industrialized countries as well. In Sweden the amount of crime news has increased from the 1960s onwards (Pollack 2001), and since the late 1980s, news reports have been concentrating particularly on juvenile violence (Estrada 1999). In the United Kingdom both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers have increased the proportions of crime in their news reports after the Second World War (Reiner et al. 2003:17–18). Also the United States has witnessed a surge in crime reporting in the 1990s (Beckett and Sasson 2000:76). The trend seems to be similar in most Western countries, perhaps even globally. It is possible that this is a long-term phenomenon: violence has risen towards its current status as 'the' sensational news topic for the last 300 years, as long as the commercialized press altogether has existed (Davis and McLeod 2003).

In several academic studies and moreover in countless public debates, the media has been claimed to be one central

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factor affecting perceptions of crime and increasing levels of fear. David Garland has suggested that the increase in crime reporting leads to a situation where people's attention is not concentrated on the statistical development of crime rates but on the media itself and on the images of criminality it creates and transmits. As time passes media images of crime are enforced into collective feelings (Garland 2001:158).

According to Ditton and Farrall (2000:12), research on fear of crime and media portrayals of crime has the greatest likelihood of advancing our understanding of the phenomenon of fear in general. However, although prior research has found several factors that are correlated with fear, the precise causal mechanisms for this correlation is unknown. Moreover, it is presumable that the relationship between media and fear of crime is not one-dimensional or mechanic but depends on several conditional factors (Eschholz et al. 2003; Chiricos et al. 2000; Pollack 2001).

In most victimization surveys fear of crime has been measured by examining the degree of worry about becoming a victim of different types of crimes (for the development of victimization surveys, see Jackson 2004). In these studies it has been noted that feelings of fear are distributed unequally between the sexes and between different populations. For example, Finnish respondents over 55 years of age express high levels of fear for walking alone in their neighbourhood at night (Niemi 2000:139), although their risk of being victimized is relatively low. Women are more fearful of being victims of street violence than men, although it is particularly young men that often are the victims.

It has been suggested that the distinction between the sexes can be explained by the fact that women fear different kinds of crime than men, such as sexual violence (Warr 1985). It has also been claimed that role expectations vary between the sexes, and that therefore differences in expressing fear of crime in a research setting as well as in every-day life, are based rather on cultural factors than on actual emotions experienced (May 2001). Sutton and Farrall (2005) have backed up the last view-point by pointing out that the difference between men and women in terms of fear-of-crime measures occurs because men are less willing to report their fear than women. Goodey (1997) has gone even further in suggesting that, compared to women, men are far more reluctant even to reveal or talk about their fear.

There are few prior studies on fear of crime in Finland. Especially studies concentrating on the factors influencing fear are few in number. Heiskanen (2002:197–8) observed that women fear more than men, people living in apartment buildings more than residents of detached or terraced houses, and that people with previous victimization experience fear more than others.

A study exploring the quantitative development of headlines in the Finnish tabloid press (Kivivuori et al. 2002) suggested that the increase of news coverage on violence was associated with the rise of fear of crime during 1988–1997. The same era also manifested a drastic increase of crime reporting on prime-time television news, as well as the launching of the first crime

reality television shows in Finland (Kemppi and Kivivuori 2004). These studies show that the rise of fear of crime coincided with a skyrocketing of the crime news volume. They also indicated that the rise of fear was not associated with a rise of criminal victimization. However, based as they were on a simple comparison of time series, the studies left open the question of the direction of the impact, and they were unable to verify whether the media content, fear, or both, were affected by other factors that were excluded from empirical analysis. Our purpose in this article is to explore more accurately the relationship between media and fear, by using the data of the 2003 Finnish Victimization Survey. The main objective is to examine whether crime media are related to avoidance behaviour and to fear of crime, when personal and vicarious victimization experiences are held constant. In this article, by using the term 'vicarious victimization' we are referring to situations where the respondents' family member or a friend has been violently victimized during the last 12 months.

Prior research: media and fear of crime

People receive information about crime from a number of sources, one major source being the media. However, it is not merely information people receive through the media, but also ideas and concepts concerning criminality (Sorenson and Peterson 1998). Moreover, the media have been noted to be one of the central information sources for crime because relatively few people have personal experience of crime or criminal victimization. The large amount of crime-related content in the media also means that crime and criminality as news topics are impossible to avoid (Lupton 1999:44–5).

There are four central hypotheses in social scientific research concerning crime media that have been utilized in order to trace individual traits and circumstances that could be used in explaining the relationship between media and fear of crime. The substitution hypothesis (explained by Eschholz et al. 2003) assumes that the less personal experience of crime the recipient has, the greater is the effect of the media on feelings of fear. The frequency of fear among the elderly is one common survey finding that often has been explained with this concept. Contrary to this, the resonance hypothesis assumes that media effects are the more significant the more comprehensively they reflect personal experiences. This hypothesis has usually been utilized to refer to personal experiences of violence (Rountree and Land 1996:174–5). Thus, it can also be applied to the victimization experiences of family members and friends.

The third hypothesis emphasizes the importance of individual vulnerability. By vulnerability one can refer either to the subjective evaluation or to the statistical likelihood for a person to be victimized. Media representations of crime and violence and their impact on fear has, for example, been stated to be minor in those groups whose probability to become victims of crime is actually the highest (Liska and Baccaglini 1990:372). The relationship between fear and the media has also been addressed from the view-point of affinity, as it has

been suggested that the similarity in experience with the presented victim (for example according to age, sex, area of residence) explains the differences in the expressed levels of fear among different groups (Eschholz et al. 2003). In this article we concentrate on exploring the substitution, resonance and vulnerability hypotheses. Because the examined data do not allow an examination of the content of different sources of crime news, or individual means of interpretation, we will not comment on the affinity hypothesis.

According to critics, studies on the relationship between media and fear have been inconsistent and problematic in terms of interpretation (Ditton et al. 2004). However, there is evidence that the perceived reality of the media content, combined with the total amount of violent material, is one central contextual factor affecting fear (Eschholz et al. 2003). In view of this, especially news media reports and crime reality programmes have been suggested to be connected with higher levels of fear compared with other program types (Oliver and Armstrong 1995).

Sample

Our aim in this article is to examine the association between exposure to crime news and fear of crime (as expressed in avoidance behaviour and worry about crime). In the conclusion, we discuss the findings from the point of view of various theoretical hypotheses. Although our data do not allow an exhaustive test of these perspectives, the findings can be interpreted as supportive evidence of one or another view-point. We use the data of the 2003 Finnish National Crime Victimization Survey. The sample ($N=8163$) is representative of the Finnish population aged 15 or older. The variables used in the analysis, their values and frequency distributions are presented in the Appendix. Assuming that crime media do not affect fear of domestic violence or work-place violence, we limit our examination only to violence that is experienced outside the family and work-place spheres.

Dependent variables: avoidance behaviour and worry about violent victimization

Fear of crime has various consequences that must be treated as indirect reactions. Fear produces avoidance behaviour and can limit social interaction and transform life-styles. A person can start avoiding certain areas because he or she over-emphasizes the possibility to become victimized there. The feeling can be a result of a personal or vicarious victimization experience, but it can also be triggered by information gained from other sources, indicating the characteristics of the place or the risk of violence there. Due to fear or media-inspired 'mean world' attitudes, people may physically withdraw from community life and avoid coming into contact with strangers and neighbours. This may in turn create spaces, which lack informal social control (Skogan 1986:215–16.)

The question first examined was stated in the survey questionnaire as follows: 'Is there an area—within one kilometre from your home—where you don't want to walk alone late in the evening or at night?' One-fifth of the survey respondents said 'yes'. The second question was; 'How worried are you about becoming a victim of violence at night outside the home?' Over one-third

of the respondents expressed being very or somewhat worried about becoming a victim. In the following analyses, the response options 'somewhat worried' and 'very worried' were combined to yield a dichotomous variable of worry about violent victimization.

Independent variables: reading density of tabloid front pages and media exposure

There were two media-related questions in the questionnaire. In this article both of these questions are addressed, although the main attention is directed towards the question measuring the reading density of tabloid front pages. This question was formulated as follows: 'Tabloid front pages and advertisements can be seen in various places even though one doesn't actually purchase the paper. How often do you read what is said in them?' The given options were: 'never', 'seldom', 'now and then', 'quite frequently', and 'frequently'.

The tabloids are quite an important source of information because as many as one-third of the respondents declare reading the front pages of the tabloids on a regular basis. The question did not place particular emphasis on the reading of crime news, but as violence and crime are central topics in the Finnish tabloids (Huovila 2002:205–06; Kivioja 2004:62–3) it is obvious that people observing the front pages are inevitably exposed to crime-related contents. Furthermore, it should be noted that the size of the audience should not merely be considered by examining the circulation rates. In Finland, the front pages and the corresponding advertisements, printed on a screaming yellow sheet, literally infest the urban, suburban and commercial landscape. For example, you cannot buy anything from a supermarket or a kiosk without being confronted by these media contents. Therefore, many more people than those who actually buy the tabloids are daily exposed to crime news, often of a gruesome kind.

The second variable we used, measures the variety of media sources the respondent regards as important sources of crime news to him or her. The sum variable was based on seven items (magazines, tabloids, other newspapers, radio programs, television crime programmes, other current affairs television programmes, and the Internet), each indicating whether the source was an important one of crime news for the respondent. The sum variable ranging from zero to seven was trichotomized. Respondents with zero to two important sources were defined as having a narrow exposure to crime news, respondents with three to four important sources were defined as having a wide exposure to crime news, whereas respondents with five or more important sources were defined as having an extensive exposure to sources of crime news. The resulting variable therefore measures the extent (or breadth) of crime media exposure.

Reading tabloid front pages and fear of violence

In Finland, the tendency to avoid a certain area is approximately four times higher among female respondents, independently of the front-page reading density (Smolej and Kivivuori 2005). The bivariate relationship between avoidance behaviour and front-page reading is, however, similar among male and female. For both males and females,

the likelihood of avoidance behaviour increases linearly as the intensity of front-page reading increases. The relationship between avoidance behaviour and reading tabloid front pages seems obvious: respondents who frequently read the front pages avoid an area close to their home more often than the other respondents.

Reading tabloid front pages and anxiety expressed towards being violently victimized appear to be connected as well. We found that of all the respondents who stated that they read the front pages on a regular basis, 41% admitted being worried of becoming victims of violence. Moreover, worry about violence appears to rise linearly: the more a respondent reads the headlines, the more likely it is that he or she is worried about personal violent victimization. This again applies to both sexes, even though the level of worry reported by females is about twice as high as for males.

Both avoidance behaviour and the fear of becoming a victim of crime seem to be connected with the reading density of the tabloids. It is, however, not possible to conclude whether this is a causal relationship. The option that already fearful respondents notice the tabloid messages more often than the other respondents should also be taken into account. It is also possible that a third factor is causing the correlation between the variables. For example, prior criminal victimization can lead both to an increased use of crime news, to avoidance behaviour and also to rising levels of anxiety. Even the mere fact of living in a city may lead to reading tabloids and to increasing levels of fear. It is therefore necessary to examine whether the relationship between fear and media variables remain robust when a host of other relevant factors are controlled.

The extent of crime media exposure and fear of violence

The method of analysis used is logistic regression, where the dependent variable is dichotomous. We examine two dependent variables: in the first model, avoidance behaviour, and, in the second model, worry about becoming a victim of violence. In the avoidance behaviour variable, the value 1 is given to those respondents who state that they have an area near their home where they avoid walking alone at night. Other respondents received value 0 on this variable. For those expressing a very or somewhat high degree of worry about becoming victims of violence at night outside their home are given the value 1, while the rest receive the value 0.

By selecting the independent variables (Appendix) our aim has essentially been to be able to hold constant factors, which have often been used in criminology in order to explain fear of crime (see Fattah 1993:54–6). Especially sex, age and area of residence have been observed as being connected with fear of crime. Besides these factors, there is also reason to examine personal and vicarious victimization experiences, for it is possible that they might explain both fear/avoidance and intense crime media use, thereby making the association between crime news exposure and fear variables totally or partially spurious.

Avoidance behaviour

The results of the regression model explaining avoidance behaviour are presented in Table I. From the first model it can be observed that respondents reading tabloid front pages frequently have a one-and-a-half times greater probability to exercise avoidance behaviour, when the importance given to different media products is held constant. However, the connection is evident only regarding tabloids. The total extent of crime media exposure does not have an effect on avoidance behaviour. When age, sex,

Table I. *Regression model explaining avoidance behaviour (N=8163).*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Reads tabloid front pages			
Not often	1.00	1.00	1.00
Often	1.47**	1.40**	1.39**
Crime media exposure			
Narrow	1.0	1.0	1.0
Wide-ranging	0.95	0.97	0.97
Extensive	1.00	1.05	1.05
Sex			
Male		1.00	1.00
Female		6.45***	6.49***
Age			
15–34		1.00	1.00
35–54		1.18	1.23*
55 or older		1.09	1.18
Area of residence			
Rural district		1.00	1.00
Semi-urban district		1.36**	1.37**
Urban district		3.60***	3.58***
Employment status			
Employed		1.00	1.00
Unemployed/disability pension		1.16	1.14
Student/in military service		0.83	0.83
Retired		1.31**	1.32*
Other		1.18	1.19
Prior victimization			
No			1.00
Has experienced threats			1.05
Has experienced physical violence			1.31**
Vicarious victimization			
No			1.00
Yes			1.31*

*=$p<0.05$
**=$p<0.01$
***=$p<0.001$

area of residence and employment status are added to the model (Model 2), the probability for women to exercise avoidance behaviour is much higher compared with male respondents (OR=6.38).

The living environment affects avoidance behaviour. Respondents living in urban districts have a higher risk of avoiding an area near their home than people who live in more rural areas. In an urban environment, the number of places that are considered dangerous or threatening is presumably higher than in the countryside. Moreover, the number of strangers in a rural area is smaller than in cities, which may decrease feelings of insecurity when moving around in public places.

Retired people are more likely to avoid areas near their home than people who are regularly employed. Elderly people move around in urban settings less than other groups. It is therefore possible that the expressed level of fear is rather connected to images of dangerous places than to personal experiences of criminality and disorder in the area. It is, however, essential to note that the association between reading tabloid front pages and avoidance behaviour does not change, and cannot be explained by the variables added to Model 2.

When personal victimization experiences are included in Model 3, respondents having experienced violence have a higher risk (OR 1.37) of exercising avoidance behaviour than those who have not experienced violence themselves. Experiencing mere threats is not sufficient to trigger avoidance behaviour. Moreover, those who have a family member or a friend that has been violently victimized during the last 12 months, are more likely to avoid an area close to their home, when compared with persons who do not have this kind of vicarious victimization experience. Thus, experiences of both personal and vicarious violence affect the person's avoidance behaviour. The relation between reading tabloid front pages and avoidance behaviour is, however, robust when victimizations are controlled. The association between reading front pages and exercising avoidance behaviour seems to be genuine. It seems that the effect of tabloids on avoidance behaviour cannot be explained by the possibility that victims expose themselves to crime news more than other people. Interestingly, extensive exposure to different sources of crime news was not associated with avoidance behaviour in any of the three models in Table I.

Worrying about violence

The risk of worrying about violence outside home at night is higher among those respondents that often read the tabloid headlines (Table II). As in the previous model, this finding remains robust when more variables are added and controlled.

However, in contrast with the analyses shown in Table I, exposure to different sources of crime news emerges as a significant correlate of worry, an association that is unaffected by the introduction of control variables in successive regression models. Respondents who have an extensive level of crime media exposure are about twice as likely to be worried than people who expose themselves to a limited

Table II. *Level of worry according to the extent of crime media exposure, % (N=8163).*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Reads tabloid front pages			
Not often	1.00	1.00	1.00
Often	1.31*	1.33**	1.30*
Extent of crime media exposure			
Narrow	1.00	1.00	1.00
Wide-ranging	1.26	1.28	1.26
Extensive	1.83***	1.97***	1.95***
Sex			
Male		1.00	1.00
Female		2.51***	2.55***
Age			
15–34		1.00	1.00
35–54		1.53*	1.64**
55 or older		1.36**	1.58*
Area of residence			
Rural district		1.00	1.00
Semi-urban district		1.31	1.32*
Urban district		2.01***	1.97***
Employment status			
Employed		1.00	1.00
Unemployed/disability pension		2.05***	2.04***
Student/in military service		1.11	1.10
Retired		1.15	1.17
Other		1.82***	1.89***
Prior victimization			
No			1.00
Has experienced threatening			2.13***
Has experienced physical violence			2.32***
Vicarious victimization			
No			1.00
Yes			1.12

*=$p<0.05$
**=$p<0.01$
***=$p<0.001$

number of crime news sources. This is a finding that immediately provokes a suspicion of spuriousness: is it perhaps so that those people who have been victimized self-select themselves to the group which regards many sources of crime news as important? However, the association remains robust when personal and vicarious victimizations are included in Model 3.

The risk for women to worry about being violently victimized is considerably higher than for men. In addition, the risk of expressing worry is twice as

high among unemployed respondents as among employed. Likewise, those living in urban areas have a higher risk of expressing worry about crime than those living in the countryside.

Personal experience of violent victimization is associated with the likelihood of worry about violence (Model 3). Those who had experienced physical violence were over two times more likely to be worried about becoming victims of violence than those who had not experienced violence. Unlike the case of avoidance behaviour, those who have experienced threats have a higher risk of expressing worry than those without such experiences. Surprisingly though, vicarious victimization experiences do not seem to be connected with worry.

Conclusion

Recent observations that crime news has increased drastically, served as an incentive for this article. Our aim has been to examine whether exposure to crime news is related to fear of crime and avoidance behaviour. The question of increasing crime news and the rising levels of expressed fear in Finland has not been addressed prior to this analysis.

Our main finding is that reading tabloid front pages is connected both with avoidance behaviour and with high levels of worry about becoming a victim of violence. Secondly, regarding many different media as important sources of crime information is associated with fear. These associations remained robust when several other relevant factors were held constant.

Besides these two main findings, we discovered other interesting factors connected with fear of crime. Not surprisingly, prior victimization experiences increased the risk of both avoidance behaviour and worry. Clearly, fear of crime is not entirely disconnected from concrete experiences. The finding does not seem to support the substitution hypothesis. However, it seems probable that the correspondence (resonance) of personal and vicarious victimization experiences with media crime content is a promising explanatory framework that warrants further study. Fear of crime is more prevalent among women and the elderly, suggesting that there is no reason to abandon the vulnerability hypothesis.

An interesting by-product of our analyses is that unemployed people have a higher risk of expressing worry about becoming victims when compared with the employed. One implication of this finding is that the question of worry portrays a more complex and unspecified phenomenon than the question measuring avoidance behaviour in which the 'dangerous' place is relatively precisely defined. Frank Furedi (1998:66–7) has noted that geographical mobility and urbanization, among other social and economic factors, have increased the level of individuation in societies, which in turn has enhanced feelings of vulnerability. The greater mobility of people in modern society results in a significant drop in information and knowledge about fellow citizens, which leads to much less predictability of behaviour. Unpredictability combined with risk generates a greater wariness in an actuarial stance towards others (Young 1999:70).

Fear of violence can be seen as a subcategory of more general feelings of

insecurity, which are influenced also by threats unrelated to crime experiences. The 'ultimate' source of general worry about violent crime may thus be related to economic insecurity. The observed link between unemployment and fear of violence can be interpreted as a partial support for a 'vicarious fear theory', according to which fear of crime expresses anxieties created by other life circumstances, so that a general uncertainty of life is channelled into fear of crime. This can explain the drastic increase in fear of crime in Finland in the 1990s (Kivivuori et al. 2002); a period when the economic depression caused mass unemployment and also the media increased the amount of crime reporting.

Discussion

There are two types of possible limitations in the present analysis that should be taken into account. The first one relates to variables that were not included in the questionnaire. When examining media effects one has to take into account the possibility that other news topics than those concentrating on crime (for example traffic accidents or environmental disasters) reduce general levels of feelings of security, which is then reflected in the observed increase in fear of violence. In future research it might be interesting to examine why non-crime-related anxieties are channelled through or expressed in anxieties about violence. Due to the limitations of the standard questionnaire used in the Finnish National Victimization Surveys, we were unable to control for variables related to the personal characteristics of the respondents. Undoubtedly, there are individual differences in tendencies to experience fear or to exercise avoidance behaviour that cannot be explained by variations in socio-demographic traits. In order to access these factors, psychological and time budget variables should be included in the questionnaire.

The second possible limitation is that we have focused on so-called main effects of the independent variables. In future the interaction effects should be taken into account as well. Several theories concerning media effects deal particularly with interactional effects (for example, the media trigger fears in the context of ethnic plurality in the neighbourhood, etc.) (Chiricos et al. 2000). New indicators of crime news reception should be developed in order to examine more analytically the relationship between different media products and fear of crime.

When evaluating the applicability of the above-mentioned hypotheses in interpreting the findings, the resonance and the vulnerability hypotheses seem to be most promising starting points for future research on media and fear of crime. In contrast, the assumption that the fear effect of media content is based on substitution is inconsistent, according to the present findings.

It is difficult, and probably impossible, to trace a single factor behind fear of crime. A sudden increase in violent media content may explain changes in fear on an individual level, but examining fear in a broader context requires a more comprehensive perspective on the phenomenon.

In principle, there can be at least three different types of processes involved

between fear and crime news. First, the relation can be causal: consuming large amounts of front-page crime news leads to feelings of fear and insecurity. While our cross-sectional data cannot prove causal links, the findings are generally consistent with the existence of such links. Second, it is possible that the causal link is reverse: people who are already fearful self-select themselves to the group which exposes itself to crime news. They can also experience the content of the news as more threatening. Third, an attempt to explain the observations by the effect of some third factors can be made. In this study several potential factors, such as sex, experience of personal victimization, vicarious victimization experience, area of residence, and employment status, were controlled. On this account, the connection between crime news and fear of crime would seem to be fairly robust.

The tabloids differ considerably from other media products, such as television crime programmes. One can switch the television off whenever one pleases, whereas it is difficult—if not impossible—to avoid the tabloid front pages in the street and commercial spaces (such as shopping malls). The fact that people reading tabloid messages tend to be more fearful than others can reflect the use of tabloid headlines as danger cues of public space (Karisto and Tuominen 1993:88–9). The association between tabloid headline browsing in the street and fear of crime may indeed function independently of a person's rational appraisal of the contents of the headlines. The crime headlines may boost a lingering sense that danger and threats are constantly present.

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Appendix

A. *Background characteristics.*

	%	*N*
Sex		
Male	48.5	3959
Female	51.5	4204
Total	100	8163
Age		
15–34	30.3	2473
35–54	36.2	2957
55 or older	33.4	2732
Total	100	8163
Area of residence		
Rural district	21.6	1765
Semi-urban district	16.7	1359
Urban district	61.7	5039
Total	100	8163
Employment status		
Employed	56.1	4576
Unemployed/disability pension	10.3	844
Student/In military service	8.4	687
Retired	13.3	1086
Other	11.9	971
Total	100	8163

B. *Prior victimization experiences.*

	%	*N*
Personal victimization		
None	90.0	7347
Has experienced only threats	4.7	381
Has experienced physical violence	5.3	436
Total	100	8163
Vicarious victimization		
Yes	13.4	1102
No	86.5	7061
Total	100	8163

C. *Avoidance behaviour and worry about being violently victimized outside home at night.*

	%	*N*
Avoidance behaviour		
Yes	23.3	1901
No	75.6	6175
Undecided	1.1	87
Total	100	8163
Worry about being violently victimized outside home at night		
Very worried	4.7	384
Somewhat worried	30.8	2515
Not at all worried	64.2	5240
Undecided/missing information	0.3	24
Total	100	8163

D. *Tabloid front-page reading density.*

	Frequently	Quite frequently	Now and then	Seldom	Never	Undecided/missing information	Total
%	29.1	27.6	21.5	14.8	6.4	0.5	100
N	2369	2251	1753	1204	525	61	8163

E. *Importance of different media products as crime information sources.*

Importance as crime source	Very important	Quite important	Not very important	Not at all important	Undecided/missing information	Total
Magazines						
%	5.8	26.7	34.7	31.0	1.7	100
N	470	2179	2829	2530	155	8163
Tabloids						
%	5.7	28.0	33.6	31.0	1.7	100
N	462	2284	2739	2524	154	8163
Other newspapers						
%	27.9	44.4	17.9	8.6	1.1	100
N	2275	3618	1458	700	111	8163
Radio programmes						
%	11.9	33.6	27.4	25.6	1.5	100
N	968	2740	2233	2083	139	8163
TV crime programmes						
%	20.3	31.2	21.7	25.2	1.6	100
N	1655	2541	1770	2052	146	8163
Other current affairs programmes						
%	20.2	46.8	20.1	11.3	1.5	100
N	1650	3812	1635	923	143	8163
Internet						
%	2.9	10.7	14.1	68.7	3.5	100
N	238	873	1150	5596	305	8163

III

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Crime victimization, exposure to crime news and social trust among adolescents

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Abstract
Interpersonal trust has recently emerged at the centre of research in social science as an important component of social capital. Earlier, it has been theorized that exposure to media cultivates a suspicious and distrusting 'mean-world' outlook on life (cultivation theory). In this article, we aim to bind these separate but obviously interconnected theoretical discussions in a combined empirical analysis, by exploring several potential correlates of social trust. As criminologists, our main interest lies in the possible association between victimization, fear of crime, use of crime news media and trust. We categorize victimization experiences as either persistent or occasional ones. In addition, we add a set of social and structural factors to our analysis. Our cross-sectional survey data consists of a nationally representative sample of 15–16 year-old Finnish adolescents ($N = 5142$). The results of the multivariate analyses indicate that both victimization and fear of crime are related to lower levels of interpersonal trust. As expected, there is a more robust association between persistent victimization and the level of trust than is the case with occasional victimization. Viewing regularly television crime reality programmes is also robustly related to lower levels of trust, a finding that supports the cultivation theory. Of social interaction variables, social support and supervision by

parents and teachers are positively related to trust. Contrary to this, participation in civic life (such as religious and various secular associations) is not related to social trust among Finnish adolescents. This and other results are here discussed applying social capital theory and cultivation theory of media effects.

Keywords
victimization, trust, adolescence, social capital, cultivation theory, crime news, Finland

Trust is in one of the most fundamental foundations of social life. It makes community life and interaction among people smooth. Trust can be defined as 'the confidence we have either in individuals or in institutions' (Giddens, 2001: 680). When we trust people we are confident that others act in a way that is not harmful for us, and that they do not try to take advantage of us. American political scientist Eric Uslaner (2002: 1) notes that 'trust is the chicken soup of social life'; it brings us all kinds of good things, yet it seems to work somewhat mysteriously.

Trust is tightly associated with generalized reciprocity. In principle, people do things for each other without expecting anything immediate in return, just hoping that some day somebody might return the favour (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2002). However, there is no way a person can be certain of the good intentions of other people or confident that his/her favour will be returned. That is why trust always involves elements of risk and potential doubt (Giddens, 1990; Lewis and Weigert, 1985). Trust (for someone or something) may be returned by betrayal as well. Hence, all trust is in a sense blind trust (Giddens, 1990: 33).

Trust is often divided into trust in specific individuals or groups (particularized trust) and into trust in more abstract people or systems (generalized trust) (Giddens, 1990; Putnam, 2000: 16–7; Uslaner, 2002; also Paxton, 1999: 98). Particularized trust involves trusting people we know, and whose trustworthiness we know by experience. In contrast to this, generalized trust is trust in strangers. It is not faith in specific people but faith in the generalized other, or believing that most people can be trusted (for example, Uslaner, 2002). It is this type of trust that is measured with the common survey question, 'Generally speaking, do you believe that most people can be trusted or can't you be too careful in dealing with people?' This dimension of trust is also the focus of this article.

Trust has emerged at the centre of recent research literature in social science largely because of the wide interest in social capital. The concept of social capital refers to networks and resources, which grow from and manifest themselves in social interaction. Resources and networks work for mutual benefit, producing at their best many desirable outcomes for the community and its members.

Trust is often seen as a key element of social capital (for example, Coleman, 1990: 306; Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 1993: 170) and for several reasons, related to its functions in the social and political realm, it has attained an important role in the social capital literature (see Stolle, 2002: 398). However, one reason why trust has gained such a significant position in social capital research might be that there are well-established ways of measuring trust, which have been used for a long time. As to social capital there have been, on the contrary, problems in defining and measuring the concept (for example, Grootaert, 2000; Paxton, 1999). The fact that trust has been measured

with similar questions for decades also provides rich possibilities for longitudinal research. Hence, it is not surprising that many social capital studies strongly emphasize trust (Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Halpern, 2001; Paxton, 1999).

Although many recent studies have considered trust as part of social capital, trust has been and still is a sufficient research topic without such a connection. Uslaner (2002), for example, has made a well-justified choice to study trust on its own. After several attempts to define the relationship between trust and social capital, he decided to withdraw from the 'definitional games' and to concentrate on trust instead. Whether trust is seen as a part of social capital or as an independent concept is not relevant for our perspective, because we approach trust mainly at the individual level. When doing this, we examine relationships between levels of trust and adolescence's victimization, the social environment and personal experiences. Therefore, the connection between trust and social capital is not as evident as when trust is seen as a community or nation level asset.

Our main interest in this article is the possible link between victimization and trust. To this end, we include five violence and property related victimization types in our analysis. Another central research interest is the association between fear of crime and trust, which we explore with the set of questions about fear of violence in different locations. Our aim is also to evaluate whether crime media cultivates mistrust among teenagers. In addition, we add a group of social and structural factors to our analysis to see if these affect the relationship between victimization and trust, and also whether they have an independent association with social trust.

TRUST AND EXPERIENCE

Particularized trust — trust in certain people or groups — is based on our experiences about them. If trust is broken it may, and often will, simply lead to mistrust towards them. When it comes down to generalized trust, the situation is somewhat more complicated. Trust in generalized others cannot be built on experience-based information concerning people or groups simply because we are not able to judge every single person's trustworthiness according to our own experiences. Uslaner (2002) suggests that generalized trust has a more profound basis in moral values, which he calls the moral foundation of trust. He suggests that generalized or moral trust does not depend on personal experiences but rather on the worldview we learn from our parents.

Moralistic trust is quite stable over time and is not affected by, for example, incidental cases of betrayal or victimization. Uslaner (2002: 17) notes that it would make little sense to judge most people on the basis of few actions, particularly when they are of minor consequence. By using several longitudinal survey data in his analysis (see Uslaner, 2002: 77–8), he presents empirical evidence to support his claims (see also Bryson and Mowbray, 2005).

In contrast to Uslaner's view, John Brehm and Wendy Rahn (1997: 1016) argue that levels of trust are very much influenced by real experiences. Russell Hardin (1993: 525) suggests that trust is the by-product of different experiences, which very well might be out of a person's own control. He sees that experience moulds the psychology of trust (Hardin, 1993: 508). There are several studies suggesting links

between personal experiences and levels of trust (for example, Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Putnam, 2000; Smith, 1997). Demographic factors such as age, race and education are often related to an individual's ability to trust others and they seem to be relatively strong predictors of trust (see Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Smith, 1997; Uslaner, 2002: 107). When it comes down to other factors such as incidental life events (for example, crime victimizations), the findings are somewhat contradictory.

Prior research shows an association between different kinds of incidental (for example, robbery) and long-term (for example, association membership) experiences and trust. In some cases the results are conflicting. Besides the question what kinds of experiences affect generalized trust, an interesting issue is how serious or continuous this experience must be to have any effect in the long run. Hence, we are interested in the differences not only between those who were victimized and those who were not, but also in the effect of persistent compared to occasional victimization. Our aim is to shed some light on the issue as we explore different factors related to adolescents' levels of trust. First we take a look at these factors and some prior research evidence about their relation to trust.

Victimization and fear of crime

There are two kinds of victims. First, victims of crime in the traditional sense; that is, those who have personally experienced crime. Second, there are people who are in-directly victimized by the fear of crime regardless of their crime experiences (Williams and Dickinson, 1993). Both the study of direct victimization and the study of fear of crime have developed into strong research traditions. However, there are not many studies that link these factors to interpersonal trust. Yet it is reasonable to assume that both types of victimizations are connected to an individual ability to trust other people.

In Uslaner's (2002: 89, 109) analysis, being a victim of a crime had no effect on generalized trust. His data included several longitudinal surveys in which both generalized and particularized trust were measured. Uslaner's finding that crime victimizations do not influence people's social trust, is somewhat surprising and even counterintuitive. It is therefore interesting to note that other studies have produced different results. Tom Smith (1997) reported that misanthropy was greater among victims of crime and violence. He used General Social Survey (GSS) data, which contained three often used indicators for social trust: the perceived fairness, helpfulness and trustworthiness of other people. Measures of victimization included robbery, burglary, and being hit, shot or threatened with a gun. The results obtained by Brehm and Rahn (1997), who also analysed GSS data, were similar. They noted that victimization (measured by fear and burglary experiences) undermined trust.

While rejecting the effect of victimization on trust, Uslaner (2002: 109) believes that the fear of crime does matter both to generalized and particularized trust. According to his analysis the perceptions of personal safety in one's home and neighbourhood were significant predictors of trust in strangers (Uslaner, 2002: 89). Catherine Ross et al. (2001) studied the link between fear of crime and trust on a community level. They explored neighbourhood disadvantage, disorder and mistrust. Mistrust was tracked by questions measuring how often respondents felt that it was not safe to

trust anyone, felt suspicious and felt sure that everyone was against them. Results of their cross-sectional survey data (N = 2482) showed that people who reported living in neighbourhoods with high levels of perceived disorder — crime, vandalism, graffiti, danger and drugs — were more mistrusting. In addition, the sense of powerlessness amplified the effect of neighbourhood disorder on mistrust. Sandra Walklate's (1998) findings suggest that the relation people have with crime, criminal victimization and the fear of crime is mediated by the relevance of their relationship with their local community and their structural position within that community.

Crime media

In addition to fear of crime there is another form of indirect victimization: crime experiences that are lived through the media. Mass media are important sources for people to learn about current affairs (Katz et al., 1997) and to define social problems like crime (for example, Williams and Dickinson, 1993). Media scholars and other social scientists have produced many theories explaining media's effects on people. One of the most prominent is cultivation theory developed by George Gerbner and his colleagues (for an overview see Gerbner, 1998).

The theory that is particularly influential on communication research, in tracking down television's effects on the public, stems from the notion that the media portrays a world filled with more menace than the reality most people inhabit. This claim has also been substantiated by empirical evidence in numerous studies concentrating on media contents (for an overview see Reiner et al., 2003; Surette, 2002). However, the cultivation theory goes beyond media contents and suggests that extensive exposure to media-reconstructed realities can result in perceptions of reality that are very different from what they might be, if people watched less television or read newspapers less often. Moreover, cultivation is concerned with the cumulative pattern communicated by media over a long period of exposure, rather than any particular content or specific effect.

Despite the popularity of cultivation theory, the support for the hypothesis that crime media creates a 'mean-world' outlook on life is somewhat mixed and inconsistent. Gerbner (1998) has found that long-term exposure to television tends to cultivate the image of a mean and dangerous world. Robin Nabi and John Sullivan (2001) found no evidence of a direct relationship between television viewing and a 'mean-world' attitude, but concluded that heavy television viewing increased the likelihood to take protective measures against crime. Daniel Romer et al. (2003) found in their research that viewing local crime-saturated television news is related to increased fear of and concern about crime. Also Donald Diefenbach and Mark West (2001) found a significant relationship between television exposure and beliefs about crime rates. The estimation patterns used by the viewers were also consistent with the television portrayals. Jonathan Cohen and Gabriel Weimann (2000) found that there was a significant relationship between intensive TV-viewing and fear of violence, but only when 'fear' was measured with direct questions, such as: 'how afraid are you of being murdered?' in contrast to traditional 'likelihood questions', such as: 'how safe do you feel walking alone in your neighbourhood at night?' Criminologists have applied elements of

cultivation theory especially to research on fear of crime. The common standpoint in criminology is that the media does not merely distort perceptions of crime, but can also generate unrealistic fears and distrust in people. This in turn may lead to what Michalis Lianos and Mary Douglas (2000: 110) call dangerization, a tendency to perceive the world through categories of menace, and to the domination of fear and anxiety.

It is important to note first, that cultivation theory has been developed in the United States and, second, that a large amount of the recent empirical research utilizing the theory has been conducted either in the United States or in the United Kingdom, both countries with substantially different media environments compared to Finland. An average Finn watches television far less than the Americans and the British (AC Nielsen, 2005; Finnpanel, 2006), and the number of free of charge television channels is also noteworthy smaller in Finland than in these two countries. This in turn means that especially when compared to the Americans who are often described as heavy viewers of television, the Finns can on the contrary be perceived as light viewers. It is also worthwhile to note that as in the other Nordic countries, in Finland also it is typical to subscribe the daily newspaper instead of purchasing it from kiosks or newsstands, which is common in most other Western countries. According to the Finnish Newspapers Association, Finland is also the leading country in the European Union in terms of aggregate newspaper circulation relative to the population (Sanomalehtien Liitto, 2006). Hence, it can be argued that the Finns as media consumers are more 'readers' than 'viewers' compared to the Americans and the British. Although there is an established research tradition on the contents and traits of American media, there are no comparative studies available which would enable assessment of the extent to which the situation is similar or different in Finland. Therefore it is essential to avoid generalizing Anglo-Saxon research findings of media contents and consumption to the Finnish society.

It has been noted that the media and government officials often tend to define young people as a homogeneous group, all possessing some common trait. According to the current public discussion in Finland, it seems that we are witnessing a surge in juvenile delinquency and vandalism (Korander and Törrönen, 2004: 146–7; Piispa, 1999: 56). For example, news-reporting on young people in the Finnish leading daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* in 2004 concentrated most often on topics related to alcohol consumption among adolescents. The fourth common type of reporting regarding young people concentrated on juveniles as crime victims or as offenders (Markkanen, 2005: 29). However, statistics do not support these representations: both delinquency and alcohol consumption have decreased during the last years among adolescents (Kivivuori and Salmi, 2005: 14–15; Luopa et al., 2005).

In this analysis, we examine if exposure to media crime reporting makes people more or less trusting (we thus exclude the impact of fictional media contents on trust). We find it important to study simultaneously the effects of crime victimization and crime news exposure. This is so because any bivariate link observed between media use and crime victimization could be spurious in the sense that prior victimizations could explain both the use of media and levels of trust.

Social life experiences

Features most commonly related to levels of interpersonal trust are different types of social contacts and participation in social life; the foundations of trust. One of the recently most studied links is the nexus between association membership and trust. This is mostly due to social capital theory and especially Robert Putnam's (1993; 1995; 2000) views. Social capital theorists have highlighted the importance of civic engagement and participation in associations as connective forces in society. Several empirical studies have confirmed that participating in both religious and secular associations is connected to people's ability to trust (for example, Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Stolle, 2001; Veenstra, 2002).

Interpersonal trust starts to develop early in childhood. Parenting and social customs are essential in this process (see Putnam, 2000: 139). Uslaner (2002) argues that trust depends upon how your parents trusted others and generally how nurturing the home environment was. He believes that 'the warmest parents produce the most trusting young people' (Uslaner, 2002: 110). Dietlind Stolle (2001) found parental practices to be important correlates of generalized trust. One of the most stressful childhood experiences is parents' divorce. Yet, as far as the level of social trust is concerned, this seems to be irrelevant (for example, Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Smith, 1997). Uslaner sees this as important evidence against the view that trust reflects life experiences. According to that view, one would certainly expect that this sort of traumatic event would affect personal levels of trust (Uslaner, 2002: 89).

DATA AND METHODS

The research is based on the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study (FSRD-04) conducted in 55 municipal comprehensive schools in spring 2004. The schools constitute a random cluster sample with geographical area and community residential density as stratification criteria. The population was limited to Finnish-language municipal schools, whereas Swedish-language, private and state schools were excluded from the sample. Eighty-five per cent of the targeted pupils completed the survey questionnaire. In each school, all ninth grade pupils comprised the target population, including pupils placed in special education classes for disciplinary or learning problems. The questionnaire was completed during regular school hours. The classes were supervised by a liaison teacher, who had received extensive briefing about the required procedures, when administering a self-report study. The students were advised not to sign the questionnaire. When completed, the respondent sealed the questionnaire in an envelope. Methodological research suggests that if a sealed-envelope system is adopted using a teacher instead of outside researchers to administer a self-report survey, it does not reduce the validity of the results (Bjarnason, 1995). Furthermore, a group (classroom) situation is not taken to compromise the results when compared with the more private mail survey (Kreuzer et al., 1992: 92–3). In fact, recent methodological research suggests that in a school context self-report surveys are more valid than other types of data collection because of their social inclusiveness (Naplava and Oberwittler, 2002).

Measures of dependent and independent variables[1]

In this article we measure the association between both short- and long-term victimization experiences and adolescents' level of social trust.

Trust Measures of social trust were based on a three-item scale used in the World Value Surveys, which we complemented by one additional question of having been betrayed by friends. The scale contained four items (alpha = 0.55): 'there are only a few persons that I can fully trust'; 'I can usually be certain that people want what's best for me'; 'if I am not careful, other people will take advantage of me'; and 'my friends have often betrayed me'.

Victimization Five different types of victimization were explored: bullying at school, theft, robbery, threat of physical violence and physical violence. Respondents were asked if they have had these experiences during the past 12 months or earlier. Respondents were categorized in three groups: those who had never been victims of any of the mentioned acts, those who had experienced one or more of them either during the past 12 months or earlier, and those who had been victimized both during the past 12 months and earlier. This categorization was meant to separate the intensity of victimization during the life course. For the sake of brevity, in what follows we use the term occasional victimization to describe the former victimization category and the term persistent victimization for the latter category. It is possible that an adolescent who was victimized both during the last year and earlier has had only two experiences of victimization; on the other hand, a respondent who was victimized more than 12 months ago may have suffered intensive victimization. Generally we do, however, assume that respondents having experienced violence both during the past twelve months and earlier tend to have more victimization experiences than other respondents. The measure of general victimization propensity (alpha = 0.66), which was used in the OLS regression model (Table 1), is a sum variable based on all victimization questions in the questionnaire.

Fear of crime A four-item scale (alpha = 0.72) measured respondents' fear of crime, more specifically fear of violence in different locations. Respondents were asked how safe they generally felt in their neighbourhood, on their way to school, and in the schoolyard during the break. A question measuring respondents' sense of safety in the centre of their hometown in the evening was also asked. Some researchers have called for a distinction between fear of victimization and likelihood of victimization (Sparks and Ogles, 1990). In this they claim that fear of victimization is rarely measured directly but that respondents are often asked to estimate their likelihood of being victims of crime by asking how safe they would feel in different locations. Kenneth Ferraro and Randy LaGrange (1987) have listed some of the methodological problems associated with this classical survey question about fear of crime. First of all, they state that the question fails to define the cause of fear (for example, fear of traffic, fear of crime, fear of getting lost). Their second critique is simply that most people do not walk alone in their neighbourhood at night, whereupon the question does not measure actual behaviour.

Indirect victimization by media Exposure to crime news was measured by asking re-spondents how often (never = 1 to always = 5) they watched reality crime programmes/crime magazines, and how often they read news about violence and other crimes in newspapers. We also used a separate question on the total television viewing time during a normal day. This is important because tests of the cultivation hypothesis have been criticized for omitting the impact of total television viewing (Ditton et al., 2004: 595–97). In the absence of such a variable, any association between crime reality TV viewing and trust could be explained by the general effect of TV and not by the specific effect of viewing crime reality TV.

Social and structural variables Support and supervision scales of parents and teachers were set to measure positive long-term experiences in adolescents' lives. The parental support and supervision scale included five items (alpha = 0.63) and contained questions about parents' ability to encourage, support and monitor their child. The teacher support and supervision scale contained five items (alpha = 0.75) about encouragement, support and ability to maintain order in school and in class.

Taking part in organized leisure associations is another measure of presumed positive long-term effects on trust. Some previous studies (Smith, 1997; Stolle, 2001; Veenstra, 2002) suggest that especially taking part in religious associations is linked to high levels of trust. Accordingly, for this article associations were grouped into religious associations (congregation-related activities) and other associations (school-related clubs, music clubs, scouts, sport clubs and marshal arts clubs). Respondents were asked if and how regularly they participated in these associations. In the questionnaire there was also a series of questions on how often respondents spent their leisure time with certain people, for example, parents, siblings, friends or whether they spent their time alone. The amount of leisure time spent alone was included in the regression analysis as a measure for lack of social contacts.

Structural variables included measures of the family's financial situation, parental employment status, and family composition. In most cases where the respondent lived in some other family form than the nuclear family, this was due to parents' divorce. Accordingly, we consider the variable of family composition to measure that life event for those who do not live with both of their parents. There are, of course, a variety of reasons for other forms than the nuclear family, such as the death of a parent or parents or child custody, which would be at least as traumatic an experience as divorce. It is probable that the effect of these other life events on trust would be roughly the same as the effect of divorce.

RESULTS

Multivariate analysis

The following series of regression analyses explore whether victimization and fear of crime have an independent relationship to trust when other variables are controlled (Table 1). We use OLS regression because the dependent variable was normally distributed. Throughout the models gender and respondents' criminal behaviour are controlled for. The aim of the three consecutive models is to observe if the association

between victimization and trust disappears when factors related to social interaction and structural factors are held constant.

The baseline Model (1) shows significant main effects between both victimization and trust, as well as between fear of crime and trust. The higher the degree of victimization, the lower the level of interpersonal trust. Fear of crime gave the same results. Viewing regularly TV reality crime programmes was related to lower levels of trust. However, reading crime news in newspapers did not have any link to trust. The first model thus indicates that the association between crime victimization and low levels of trust is unmediated by media use. On the other hand, exposure to crime reporting in television is directly associated with low trust, in a manner that cannot be explained by prior victimization.

Table 1 Regression models explaining level of trust

Independent Variable	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Victimization variables			
Victimization	–.229***	–.188***	–.184***
Fear of crime	–.178***	–.139***	–.136***
Indirect victimization			
viewing TV crime programs	–.047**	–.051**	–.052***
reading newspaper crime news	.001	–.021	–.021
Social variables			
Parental support/supervision		.140***	.134***
Teacher support/supervision		.158***	.156***
Leisure time spent alone		–.135***	–.133***
Religious associations		.015	.013
Other leisure associations		–.024	–.024
Time spent viewing TV		–.021	–.020
Structural variables			
Family financial situation			.055***
Parental unemployment			.025
Family composition			.015
R2	0.12	0.20	0.20

**$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

In Model 2, social variables are included. Both victimization and fear of crime remain related to trust, although there is some erosion in the correlations. Also the link between viewing non-fictional TV crime programmes and lower levels of trust remains, even when the total hours of viewing television are controlled for. Of social variables, social support and supervision provided by parents and teachers are significantly related to levels of trust. Adolescents reporting higher amounts of parental and teacher support and supervision seem to be more trusting.

In contrast to some previous studies (Brahm and Rahn, 1997; Stolle, 2001; Veenstra, 2002), our analysis indicates that participating in leisure activity associations is not related to social trust among Finnish adolescents. It would seem that neither congregation-related nor secular associations make adolescents more trusting. In other words, adolescents refraining from organized leisure activities are as trusting as those participating actively in these associations.

However, spending most of one's leisure time alone is related to a decreased level of interpersonal trust. Being lonely seems to make adolescents significantly less trusting. It is also possible that the causal link flows in the opposite direction. An adolescent who is mistrusting might withdraw from other people because of his suspicions. That way he chooses to be alone. Also other people might avoid the company of a mistrusting and suspicious individual. In these cases low trust would be the cause and loneliness the effect. In Model 3, structural socio-economic variables are included. The core finding is that the correlations of victimization, fear of crime and crime media variables to trust remain essentially the same. This also applies to social variables. As far as structural variables are concerned, only the financial situation of the family emerges as a significant predictor of interpersonal trust. A better financial situation is related to higher levels of trust. In line with previous studies (for example, Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Smith, 1997) family composition and parents' employment status have no association with adolescents' social trust.

Victimization types and intensity

The previous regression analysis showed the relationship between victimization and interpersonal trust. Next we turn to the analysis of different victimization types and also to the intensity of victimization. All variables in Model 3 in Table 1 are included in the logistic regression analysis. This analysis has two aims: first, to find out whether different types of victimization experiences have an association with levels of trust; second, to see whether the intensity of personal experiences is related to trust. We explore these factors in the group of the most distrusting decile of adolescents. Previously, similar criteria of 10 per cent have been used in order to tap groups of the most problematic adolescents according to delinquency and psychological symptoms (Kivivuori, 2000: 130; Mitchell and Rosa, 1981: 20–1).

The results indicate that in addition to certain negative experiences, the intensity of these experiences also affects individual levels of trust. All types of victimization experiences presented in Table 2 were associated with a lower level of trust. Persistent victimization of any type makes the odds for low trust at least twice as high as in the non-victim group. Also occasional victimization experiences of any type increase the odds for mistrust significantly. Of all victimization types, bullying has the strongest link to levels of adolescents' trust. The risk of being mistrusting was three times higher for respondents with persistent bullying experience when compared with respondents with no bullying victimization (OR = 3.2).

Table 2 Logistic regression models explaining low levels of trust (only odds of victimization are shown)

	Victimization Intensity		
Victimization	*None*[a]	*Occasional*	*Persistent*
Bullying	1.00	1.90***	3.23***
Robbery	1.00	1.80***	2.59***
Theft	1.00	1.30*	2.33***
Violence	1.00	1.51**	2.01***
Threat of violence	1.00	1.67***	2.12***

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.
[a] Reference category.

CONCLUSIONS

Main findings

We have studied the association between several personal experiences and trust. While this examination benefited from, for example, a relatively wide range of factors related to trust that we were able to explore, there are some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the biggest limitation of this design is that our data is cross-sectional. Owing to this, we obviously cannot ascertain the direction of causal relationships. Rather than determining if victimization predicts the level of trust in the long run, our data suggest a relationship between trust and past experiences. Second, given our use of a ninth grade student population, our findings cannot be generalized to a wider population. All respondents were of the same age (15–16 years), all with similar education, and nearly all having the same ethnic background. And, yet, these three factors — age, education and ethnicity — are often considered the most powerful predictors of interpersonal trust. Keeping these reservations in mind, we conclude with our main results.

The core finding of the present article was that criminal victimizations undermine adolescents' social trust in other people. This finding may not seem very surprising but, as noted earlier, there are some studies that do not manifest this link. Our study also shows that crime victimization reduces trust when fear of crime and exposure to crime news are held constant. This indicates that the effect of victimization cannot be explained by the idea that victimization creates fear which in turn reduces trust. Either can it be presumed that victims self-select themselves to be heavy users of crime news, which in turn reduces social trust. Instead, victimization seems to be independently associated with reduced trust.

The more persistently an adolescent is victimized, the more likely he/she is to belong to the most distrusting segment of all adolescents. Of various types of victimization, being bullied more than once over a significant period of time seems to have

the strongest association with reduced trust in other people. However, the differences between various crimes with respect to their implications for trust were relatively small.

According to our results, fear of crime and exposure to TV crime news are also independently associated with lack of trust. It seems that viewing television crime magazines and crime reality programmes significantly decrease levels of trust. However, reading often crime news in newspapers is not related to trust. We can conclude that the use of crime media seems to cultivate distrust when the cultivation effect is limited to television. Our findings also suggest that the cultivation effect may be programme or product-specific rather than a result of total media use. Longitudinal studies about cultivation effects on adolescents (Gerbner, 1998: 180) show that television can have an independent influence on attitudes and behaviour over time, but that beliefs and daily practices can also influence viewing.

The present article indicates that the associations between victimization, fear of crime and exposure to TV crime news are not a function of other, deeper links emanating from social patterns of interaction or social structural variables. Overall, these findings add to prior research, by confirming in regard to adolescents, the findings of those scholars who have located victimizations' effects on trust in adult populations (Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Ross et al., 2001).

Social relations and trust

Uslaner (2002: 121) has expressed scepticism about the link between association membership and trust. He claims that for most types of formal and informal social contacts, trust is neither the cause nor an effect. When we look at adolescent participation in organized leisure activities, our results confirm Uslaner's analysis. Being a member of these kinds of associations is not related to adolescents' levels of trust. On the other hand, leisure time activities embody important forms of informal social contacts. According to our analysis, spending a lot of one's leisure time alone is related to lower levels of trust. It would seem that it is not so important what form the social contacts take, as long as one has them. This is also interesting from the social capital theory's point of view, which tends to emphasize association membership over more informal friendship ties (for example, Putnam, 2000).

One possible reason why association membership was not related to adolescents' levels of trust in this article could be that there are other more influential forms of social contacts. Of all social variables, social support and supervision provided by parents and teachers were most robustly related to trust. Lack of support and supervision seems to create mistrust in adolescent life. During teenage also the importance of peer groups is increasing. For example, school friends or other close networks of friends play a sig-nificant role in the social life of adolescents. Organized leisure activities are only one form of social contacts to peer groups and apparently not the most important. Further work is called for to clarify the implications of peer groups and other forms of social ties to adolescents' interpersonal trust.

Classical criminological control theory, social bonding theory (Hirschi, 1969: 16) states that 'delinquent acts result when an individual's bond to society is weak or

broken'. When bonds to other community members are strong, the individual will be controlled and consequently less likely to violate the law. This seems to apply to the level of trust as well. When adolescents are poorly supported and supervised by parents and teachers, and social contacts in general are scarce, adolescents become less trusting. The causality is undoubtedly reciprocal whereby less trusting adolescents find it harder to bond with other people. This leads to a vicious circle; weak ties produce mistrust and mistrust prevents bonding. In this discussion it should be kept in mind that individual characteristics and behaviour mould other people's reactions towards an individual. It is known that a child or an adolescent whose behaviour is deprecating or difficult evokes harsh and inconsistent reactions from parents (see Lytton, 1990; Sampson and Laub, 1993: 86–91). That way a child who is unsociable and timid from the start probably has difficulties in making contacts with other people. To find out which factor — mistrust or lack of social contacts — is the original cause of this circle would require longitudinal research from the very early years of childhood.

Suggestion for further research

In the light of our analysis we cannot endorse Uslaner's (2002) view that personal experiences are trivial to interpersonal trust. On the contrary, our results indicate that — at least in the case of adolescents — different life experiences, for example, victimization, would have an effect on trust. Our findings raise some suggestions that could be taken into consideration in future research. Much more accurate measures than those used in this article, are needed to differentiate the full range of victimization and its relationship to social trust. Our categorization of victimization into occasional and persistent was not very detailed. There is a great difference, for example, if experience of violence is continuous, like in many cases of domestic violence and bullying, or if it is an incidental attack such as robbery. Another matter is defining the link between the offender and the victim. It can be assumed that the impact of victimization on social trust would be related to the fact whether the victim knew the offender or not. One could hypothesize that if the offender was unknown to the victim, the effect on generalized trust would be more probable than in the case of a familiar offender.

There are reasons to believe that phenomena such as fear of crime, media exposure to crime representations, and lack of social trust are intimately related. As described by James Coleman (1988) and Robert Sampson (1997), social capital is something that facilitates interpersonal action. It is a well-established fact that fear of crime can have a negative impact on communities. Because of fear, people may physically withdraw from community life and avoid coming into contact with strangers, who are treated with suspicion and mistrust. This discourages preventive responses to crime and may encourage crime by creating spaces, which lack informal social control (Skogan, 1986: 215–16). According to Mark Warr (2000: 482), it is difficult to deny the power of fear to tear the social fabric asunder. As observed in this examination, media images and representations of crime appear to diminish people's social capital by reducing social trust. Exposure to crime news diminishes interpersonal social trust even when personal or family victimization is held constant.

The findings of the present study point towards the need to connect the study of crime media with the study of social capital. Our findings suggest that increasing

media coverage of crime may well be one factor which explains the (possible) general decline of social capital in western societies. However, the causal connections are probably reciprocal and complex: it may well be that the impact of crime news on social trust exists only if the local or structural context already manifests some level of trust erosion.

Low level of trust has been related to adolescents' criminal behaviour (Salmi and Kivivuori, 2006). It is also known that victimization is high among criminally active individuals (Lauritsen et al., 1991). This is a matter of lifestyle and life course. Negative factors tend to cumulate. One feature associated with problematic youth seems to be social mistrust, in addition to weak social contacts, delinquent or in other ways troubled behaviour, as well as victimization. Putnam's (2000: 137) observation that 'people who trust are all-round good citizens' seems to apply already to adolescents. Longitudinal research of social trust during the life course is called for. This would make it easier to construe whether trust is a by-product of parenting practices or general life events, as well as the extent to which it is a stable feature of an individual.

Note

1 Some authors regard scale reliabilities under 0.60 as problematic. Of the scales used in this analysis, one fails this standard (inter personal trust). This may be due to the fact that some items of this scale had noncentral means. (For example, DeVellis, 1991: 83, 85.)

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IV

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Violence in Crime-Appeal Programming and in Crime Statistics

A Content Analysis of Finnish Poliisi-TV

Mirka Smolej

Abstract

Numerous studies have noted that media representations of violent crime do not correspond to actual levels and features of violence in society. The present article examines whether this is true of the Finnish crime-appeal program Poliisi-TV. In addition, the article identifies similarities and differences in Finnish violence reporting in comparison with international research findings. The data consist of 23 episodes including 67 violence vignettes that are contrasted with statistical data on violence. Violence is highly over-reported in the program. A typical violent crime is an assault on the street at night between two previously unacquainted Finnish men, although reports on more hidden and rare types of violence are also prominent. Thus, the common generalization that crime media concentrate on the most violent and serious crimes perpetrated on the most vulnerable victims is disputed. The article discusses possible explanations for the differences among Anglo-Saxon and Nordic crime media contents and calls for more research on crime media's positive implications.

Keywords: crime media, media criminology, violence, crime-appeal programming, crime statistics, descriptive content analysis

Introduction

An overview of crime media studies (Reiner 2007: 378-393) points out several characteristics regularly found when using content analysis. First, crime stories are prominent in all media, and the amount has been constantly increasing since the Second World War (Davis and McLeod 2003). Second, the vast majority of stories are about serious violent crimes, whereas white-collar crime is underreported compared with victimization surveys and crime statistics (Surette 2002; Heber 2007). Third, offenders and victims in the media appear to be of higher status and older than those in crime statistics and the risk of victimization presented is more serious than it is in the real world. Fourthly, the effectiveness of the police and criminal justice system is portrayed in a favorable light, for example by overemphasizing the proportion of solved crimes. Finally, the media tend to focus on specific, individual cases and report little about wider trends, underlying causes or policy issues. (Reiner 2007: 378-393.)

Crime media is a popular research topic in several disciplines, particularly in sociology, communication studies, psychology, cultural studies and criminology. The present

approach to studying media is criminological. The differences between the points of departures are not clear-cut, though some key elements define and separate criminological media research (e.g., media criminology) from other traditions.

Media criminology centers around three main areas of focus: the association between crime media and fear of crime, the connection between crime media and people's propensity to report about crimes to the police, and the relationship between media images of crime and public opinion (Kivivuori 2002a: 310-315). These three main interest areas can be and are often inter-connected. Thus, fear of crime can be seen to have an effect on the propensity to report crimes to the police or on individual attitudes. The main difference, in contrast to traditional communication studies, is that instead of being interested in the underlying structural *causes* of media violence criminology is focused on the possible *implications* and *consequences* of violent media content.

Thus, in traditional communication research, discussions about media as an industry, journalism as an institution, and analyses of the forces that might drive selection of media contents are not provided. The exclusion of such examinations does not undermine their importance or relevance. Instead, the aim is to present an alternative point of departure for researching media in the limited space of an individual article.

Particularly in criminology, the effects of crime media have mostly been seen as fundamentally subversive or as a form of social control. Basically, the former notion sees the media as a threat to law, order and morality, whereas the latter is worried about the exaggerated public alarm regarding crime cultivated by the media (Reiner 2007, 376-377). The predominance of these points of departure has led to a lack of empirical investigations on the possible positive implications of crime media. Thus, worries about the consequences of media representations of crime have generated a research industry that examines the content and implications of media crime stories (Reiner et al. 2003: 15), particularly in the UK and US, although similar research interests appear to be growing in the Nordic countries as well (Smolej and Kivivuori 2008).

In the present article, I examine how one crime-appeal program, Poliisi-TV (PTV), depicts violence. The focus is on the types of violence presented and on the representations of victims and offenders. The contents are contrasted with Finnish crime statistics for 2008 (CS) and with the most recent National Victimization Survey of 2006 (NVS). The objective is to examine the following research questions:

> RQ1: Is violence in PTV distorted in a manner similar to what has been noted to be the case in various studies on crime media?
>
> RQ2: What are the similarities and differences in Finnish violence reporting compared to previous research findings on crime media?

The vast amount of research shows that, regardless of the specific product or genre, representations of crime in the media are distorted (Reiner 2007), though the intensity of the distortion naturally depends on the definition of "crime media" in each individual study (Kitzinger 2004, 175). In the present article, "crime media" refers to crime news reporting and reality-crime programming and does not include examinations or references to fictional media.

Crime – Appeal Programming

Nabi et al. (2003: 304) have defined reality television programs as filming real people as they are living out events in their lives, contrived or otherwise, as these events occur. However, during recent years, the concept and definition of reality television has broadened and fragmented, because there is huge variation in programs and formats that fall into the category (Baruh 2009).Moreover, increasing numbers of crime programs are constantly being introduced to the viewers.

Particularly troublesome for the study of reality TV sub-genres is that scholars appear to group programs based on personal impressions of similarity rather than on either clearly defined program characteristics or on viewers' perceptions of common themes (Nabi 2007: 372). In the present article, I follow Kafatou-Haeusemann's (2007: 85) definitions of reality-crime programming. She notes that this TV genre consists of two separate formats: reality-based police shows and crime-appeal programs. The former format presents and justifies the police as the authoritarian agents of crime control, whereas the latter provides heroic space for ordinary citizens. Common features of all reality-crime programs seem to be the tendency to overemphasize street crime, visually dramatic elements, fast pace and strong emotional appeal (Hallin 2000: 269).

The two format types also differ from each other regarding program contents. In reality-based police shows, the audience is seemingly in the backseat of a police car and present during police encounters. The focus of crime-appeal programs is instead more on crime victims as well as on their families and friends, who are often interviewed about a crime. Showing video footage and photos of actual or suspected perpetrators in order to interest the public in calling in to the program and helping the police catch the criminal is a distinctive characteristic of crime-appeal programs.

Reality-crime broadcasting justifies its existence by claiming to provide a twofold public service function: first, to help the police capture wanted offenders and to clear up unsolved criminal cases and, second, to warn the public about certain kinds of criminal victimization (Kafatou-Haeusermann 2007: 90). Much of the enduring success of reality-crime programs lies in the way they respond to and perpetuate our culture's perennial fascination with identifying and seeing both criminals and victims (Jermyn 2003: 175).

Crime-appeal programming has not been previously studied in Finland. In the Nordic and continental Europe context, as well, there is very little academic research on the crime-appeal program genre (however see Dalhquist 2000; Kafatou-Haeusermann 2006; Brants 1998; Dauncey 1998). The domination of British and American studies may well distort the overall picture of crime media contents on a global scale. Thus, it is essential to study crime media outside the Anglo-Saxon context.

Data and Methods

The target of the present study, PTV, is a weekly Finnish crime-appeal program. It has aired since 1989 and has several sister programs around the world. Of the programs familiar to the author, PTV most closely resembles Efterlyst (Sweden) and Crimewatch (UK). Like other crime-appeal programs, PTV also claims to present true stories about crime, criminals and victims. In this respect, it is a hybrid form of programming: it resembles aspects of the news and entertainment programs (Cavender and Fishman 1998). One major difference in comparison to most crime-appeal programs is that PTV airs

via one of the state-owned television channels, YLE TV2, and is thus not commercially financed.

Altogether, 23 episodes, including 148 crime vignettes, aired autumn 2005 (n=59), spring 2006 (n=31) and spring 2008 (n=58) have been digitally saved. Year 2007 was not included in the data due to a lack of research funding. Because of technical problems related to the Finnish digitalization process, all intended episodes from 2006 were not successfully saved. Therefore, the final number of saved vignettes varies across the years studied.

This raw data consists of 12 hours of material. In the first phase of the data analysis, content analysis was utilized in filtering and organizing the topics of the vignettes into headlines in a SPSS matrix. Each vignette serves as a unit of analysis. Related to this phase, all vignettes were watched through several times and some preliminary notes were made about the overall contents and construction of the material. In the present article, the term vignette refers to a news-clip or an interview related to a recent criminal incident.

In the second phase, all vignettes handling violence have been transcribed to text. The main analytic phase was to include all stories that reported some kind of real violence. Only intentional non-fictional criminal violence and attempts at intentional violence were included. Stories about harassment and bullying at school or work have also been included. Traffic accidents caused by drunk driving have been excluded. Related to this process, quantitative elements of the contents were collected and coded to the matrix. The coding protocol included quantifiable indicators of victim and perpetrator demographics, type of offense, and of the relationship between perpetrator and victim.

It is evident that strict quantitative analysis may result in the exclusion of valuable content that cannot be reduced to numeric form. Therefore, it has also been necessary to examine the qualitative traits found in the vignettes. This enables an examination of the more subtle elements of crime media, such as dramatization and emotivistic techniques. The analytical framework can be described as twofold: first, as obtaining an overview through basic quantitative analysis and, second, as taking the analysis in a qualitative direction by using strict definitions of the targeted data contents (see also Lindgren 2008: 97-98). Thus, descriptive content analysis has been utilized (Reiner et al. 2003), meaning that quantitative data have been supplemented with verbal and visual elements in order to illustrate central quantitative elements in the data. The following data excerpt shows what the final transcribed vignette looks like. In this example, a woman is talking about how being assaulted had affected her:

> Living was [a color photo of the injured face, the camera zooms closer] difficult with the hand, and my face was totally in pieces and my glasses broken… So I don't have that many memories, because I don't think I was able to do much then. Probably I was just trying to get better [laughs a little].

The final PTV data consist of 67 violence vignettes from the years 2005, 2006 and 2008, which are contrasted with CS 2008 and NVS 2006 data. The CS data are available for the public on the Internet via Statistics Finland's homepage. The NVS data have been accessed for the purpose of this study with the permission of the National Research Institute of Legal Policy, which hosts the data collection and analysis together with Statistics Finland. Some of the examined variables are available only through one of the

statistical sources, but information from both sources is provided whenever possible. However, because the PTV data were gathered during three years, all presented figures should be treated as descriptive instead of representative.

It is important to underline that the police records and victimization surveys produce different, even conflicting, pictures of crime and violence, and that there are several pitfalls in interpreting the meaning of these statistics (Maguire 2007; Sparks 1992). For example, the official statistics on crime do not include incidents that have not been reported to the police. Thus, changes in recorded crime statistics do not always reflect changes in criminal activity (see Kivivuori 2002b: 2-3). The victimization surveys also have their limits, including the problem of "hidden crime", and include several unique problems of measurement (see Coleman and Moynihan 1996).

Amount and Type of Violence

Forty-three per cent of the program content deals with violence[1]. The portrayed crime types are presented more closely in Table 1.

Table 1. *Violence in PTV by Presented Offenses*

Crime types	%	N
Assault	30	20
Homicide	25	17
Robbery	10	7
Rape	10	7
Organized crime	7	5
Ethnic violence	4	3
Bullying/harassment	4	3
Human trafficking/kidnapping	4	3
Rioting	3	2
Total	100	67

The most common violent act portrayed in the program is assault, constituting one third of the total contents. Assaults usually take place on the street, at night and between strangers. Homicides are the second most common violence vignettes. The variation between circumstances and perpetrator and victim traits is extensive.

Every tenth violence vignette in PTV portrays robberies. They are commonly victimless in the sense that no human victim of the crime is named or shown. The robberies have typically occurred in stores or kiosks, and the vignette is accompanied by video surveillance footage of the suspect. Rapes are as common in the program as robberies are. The victims are rarely interviewed, and when they are, their faces and voices are blurred to prevent identification. Stories on organized crime deal with motorcycle club violence and drug offenses. Ethnic violence includes stories of so-called honor violence, where Muslim women are interviewed about their experiences of violence. There are three vignettes both on bullying and harassment in school and at work, and three stories on human trafficking. Two vignettes concern a large riot that took place in Helsinki in 2006.

The amount of violence in PTV is highly exaggerated when compared to reported crime. According to CS 2008, over half of the committed offenses in Finland are traffic offenses. Property crimes constitute one third of the total amount. Crimes of violence (including sex crimes) constitute fewer than 5 per cent of all recorded crime. The NVS 2006 data indicate that approximately ten per cent of Finns end up as victims of violence or threats (Sirén et al. 2007: 2). Thus, other than violent crime, especially traffic offenses and white-collar crime are heavily under-represented in PTV. The PTV findings are consistent with previous research on media contents (Surette 2002; Reiner 2007), although the distortion between the media and statistics is not as drastic in PTV (43%) as appears to be the case in other reality-crime programs. For example, studies on reality-crime programming in the US and UK have reported the proportions of violent crime to be 87 per cent (Oliver 1994), 84 per cent (Kooistra 1998) and 72 per cent (Cotter et al. 2008).

Offender and Victim Characteristics

Reality-crime portrayals of crime, criminals and victims are distorted in a manner very similarly to portrayals in crime news: crimes are violent, criminals are men and victims are women (e.g., Oliver 1994; Cavender and Bond-Maupin 1993; Dahlquist 2000). In addition, research has directed particular attention to four elements of victim and perpetrator traits: age, ethnicity, gender, and the relationship between the parties involved. In what follows, I will also examine how the place of violence is presented in PTV.

Age

Criminal offending is one of a number of psychosocial disorders that are characteristic of youth in the sense that they increase in prevalence in adolescence or early adulthood (Smith 2002: 702). Violence is no exception to this rule (Aaltonen et al. 2008). For example, according to CS 2008, the vast majority of robberies are committed by young men, and young people – young men in particular – are also the most likely victims of violence (Lehti et al. 2009: 70-71). The NVS 2006 data indicate that younger people are generally far more often victimized by violence than are older people. The same applies to both men and women, although women's overall victimization levels are lower (Lehti et al. 2009: 78).

The most common age group committing crimes of violence in PTV is 21 to 30 years of age (Table 2), constituting nearly one third of all cases. It is almost as common that all information about the perpetrator is absent from the vignette. Sometimes this is because there have been no eyewitnesses to the crime, sometimes because emphasis is put on other issues, for example on portrayals of the missing goods. In one-fifth of the vignettes, more than one person is suspected of having committed the crime. Both particularly young and old perpetrators are rare in the footage. Thus, in portraying people under 30 as the most crime active group, PTV conveys a picture that is rather consistent with the statistics.

The victims in PTV are somewhat older than the perpetrators, most commonly in the age group 31 to 60 years. Nearly one-fourth of the vignettes portray more than one victim for an individual crime. Vignettes lacking a crime victim are rarer than cases without a personalized perpetrator. A typical case lacking a victim is a grocery store robbery,

Table 2. *Age of Violence Suspect and Victim in PTV (%)*

	Suspect	Victim
Under 20	7	16
21-30	27	6
31-60	16	34
Over 60	1	5
More than one suspect/victim	22	24
Missing	25	15
Total	100	100

where video footage and computer constructions of the suspect are shown, but details of the incident are not told and the victim(s) is not identified. The victims in PTV are somewhat older than the perpetrators, although the proportion of individuals under 20 years of age is over twice as large among victims as among perpetrators. Moreover, old people are slightly more often portrayed as victims than as perpetrators. Still, both very young and very old victims are not the most typical victims in the program.

These findings on PTV portrayals are not consistent with previous research. According to Jewkes (2004: 37), in crime media, the victim's age is often stated if and when it fits to the range of criteria of the programs newsworthiness. Therefore especially vulnerable victims, such as children and old people, are considered good and worthy, *ideal victims* (Christie 1986), and they appear frequently in news reports. For example, in Crimewatch, girls, young women, and elderly people are typical victims (Jewkes 2004: 155), and according to Leishman and Mason (2003: 13), a typical street mugging victim in the (British) media is a vulnerable old lady whose handbag has been snatched.

Gender

Certain trends and patterns in criminality regarding gender have long been observed. These include that women commit a small proportion of all crimes, and that crimes committed by women are fewer, less serious, more rarely professional, and less likely to be repeated (Heidensohn 2002: 491). For example, in 2008, only 10 per cent of robbery suspects in Finland were women (Lehti et al. 2009: 70). Regarding all crime types, the percentage was 19 (Honkatukia 2009: 233). Previous research on crime media has also found that the majority of violence portrays men as perpetrators (Kafatou-Haeusermann 2007: 342; Cavender et al. 1999) and women as victims (Kafatou-Haeusermann 2007: 351).

PTV portrayals of suspects are dominated by men (Table 3). Men are suspects in over half of all the violence vignettes, whereas the percentage of women is only seven. There are several suspects in nearly one third of the vignettes. In these cases, gender is usually not stated, and it is also impossible to determine otherwise. These include crimes such as gang fights, school bullying and rioting. In nine per cent there is either no knowledge of the perpetrator's identity or no reference to a perpetrator. The data include, for instance, a vignette of a bank van robbery in which nothing is said about the perpetrator or victim/s.

Table 3. *Violence Perpetrator's Gender (%)*

	PTV	CS 2008	IVS 2006
Male	55	70	83
Female	7	11	12
Several/both	28	-	-
Unknown/missing	9	19	5
Total	100	100	100

The proportion of men among violence suspects in PTV corresponds rather well to both the information on CS and the IVS data, although the large percentage of multiple suspects in PTV makes the direct comparison challenging.

According to police statistics, men end up as victims of violence more often than women do (e.g., Lehti et al. 2009: 71), but the types of violence experienced differ significantly among men and women. Particularly domestic violence towards women is often left undetected by the police (Aromaa and Heiskanen 2000: 128-131). Men experience more stranger-violence, whereas among women the perpetrator is often previously known (Honkatukia 2009: 243). These tendencies are partly reflected on the IVS findings (Table 4), which indicate no quantitative difference in violence experiences among men and women.

The most common violence victims in PTV are men (Table 4), although the proportion of exclusively female victims is thrice as large among victims as it is among perpetrators. In one fifth of the cases, there are multiple victims for one crime, and in ten per cent the victim's gender is not known or not stated. Men's higher prevalence as victims is consistent with the CS data, and does not conflict with IVS findings either, although the rather large proportion of several victims in PTV should be taken into account.

Table 4. *Violence Victim's Gender (%)*

	PTV	CS 2008	IVS 2006
Male	43	62	50
Female	25	35	50
Several/both	21	–	–
Unknown/missing	10	3	–
Total	100	100	100

The examination does not support previous findings on crime media's tendency to over-emphasize female crime victims (Kafatou-Haeusermann 2007: 351; Jewkes 2003), but on the contrary indicates that female violence victims are under-represented in PTV.

Ethnicity

Finland is an ethnically homogenous country. In 2006, the percentage of foreign nationality citizens was 2.3[2]. During recent years, most foreigners living in Finland have originated from Estonia, Russia and Sweden (Niemi et al. 2009: 251). These are also the

largest minority groups based on spoken languages in Finland (Suomen väestö 2009). According to statistics, in 2008, six per cent of all persons suspected of offenses known to police in Finland were foreigners. A majority of them were Russians, Estonians and Swedes, and they were most often suspected of traffic offenses. Regarding violent crime, foreigner suspects were over-represented in rapes and robberies (Niemi et al. 2009: 252-4). Studies of foreigners and immigrants as crime victims in Finland indicate that they commonly suffer from many varieties of discrimination, including attacks of racist violence (Niemi et al. 2009).

Studies on crime media, mostly conducted in the US and UK, have stated that crime-reality programs tend to over-represent crimes involving black offenders and under-represent black victims, especially males in both categories (Oliver and Armstrong 1995; Jewkes 2003: 161). Also gang, gun and knife violence is often attached to particular ethnic groups (Sveinsson 2008). The same tendency has been seen the German reality-crime program XY, which portrays 62 per cent of all perpetrators as foreigners (Kafatou-Haeusermann 2007: 345). A study examining the contents of Cops (Cotter et al. 2008: 283), on the other hand, indicated that the majority of both suspects and victims in the program are white. Still, non-whites are most likely to be responsible for violent crime, whereas whites are suspected more often of property crimes and domestic violence.

The findings on PTV are not consistent with the above findings. Only eight per cent of the perpetrators in PTV are non-Finnish, whereas according to CS 2008 the percentage is 29. The proportion of foreign violence suspects in PTV is not only remarkably smaller than previous studies suggest, but also differs significantly from the picture transmitted by crime statistics. The same trend applies to foreign violence victims. According to CS, the proportion in 2008 is 13 per cent, whereas in PTV the percentage is six. No single ethnic group is highlighted in the footage. Thus, the examination indicates that ethnic minorities are heavily under-represented in PTV, both as violence suspects and as violence victims. This finding might be partly explained by the fact that the largest ethnic minorities in Finland are Russians and Estonians, who do not differ in physical appearance from the general population.

Relationship

PTV strongly over-emphasizes "stranger-danger" in its footage (Table 5). In most cases, the perpetrator is a complete stranger to the victim and/or to the police. The proportion is drastically distorted when compared with data from CS and IVS. Violence among family members and friends is also heavily under-reported in the program.

Table 5. *Victim's Prior Relationship to Perpetrator*

	PTV	CS 2008	IVS 2006
Unknown	72	29	48
Spouse, relative	13	15	11
Friend, acquaintance	15	34	33
Missing	-	22	8
Total	100	100	100

On the other hand, PTV vignettes portraying violence among family members and relatives corresponds well with both statistical sources. These topics feature vignettes, for example, on domestic violence and honor violence. This suggests that PTV has a more nuanced concept of violence than do its Anglo-American sister-programs, which contain only few reports on every-day violence (Reiner 2007). Moreover, although the proportion of strangers as violence perpetrators is exaggerated, in PTV they are not so much presented as "faceless predators" (Surette 2002: 69), but instead merely as unidentified, anonymous characters.

Place of Violence

According to both PTV and IVS, the most common place for violence is the street (Table 6), and the proportions of violence in private homes and the victim's workplace are also rather consistent between the two data sources. The major differences are connected with the proportions of bar violence and with the category of missing information.

Table 6. *Place of Violence (%)*

	PTV	IVS 2006
Street	34	24
Private home	19	24
Victim's workplace	18	23
Bar, restaurant	3	20
Missing	25	9
Total	100	100

Bars and restaurants appear as settings for violence nearly seven times less often in PTV as they do in IVS. This might be explained by the fact that the majority of cases are reported to the police and solved with help from witnesses. Thus, the need for the assistance of crime media is less in these cases. Another inconsistency between the two sources is the proportion of missing information. In PTV, one fourth of the vignettes do not specify the place of violence. Examples of these include vignettes in which the crime has supposedly occurred abroad and cases in which the place the victim was found is suspected to be different than the actual crime scene.

Overall, PTV exaggerates street-violence in its footage, but the proportion is not as drastically distorted as it appears to be in international comparisons (Surette 2002; Hallin 2000). In addition, PTV's tendency to report on more mundane forms of violence is reflected in the proportions of private homes and workplaces as settings for violence.

Findings

The amount of violence in PTV is highly over-represented in comparison to both CS 2008 and NVS 2006 data. Crimes such as assaults, homicides and robberies are staples of PTV, accounting for nearly half of all crime-related content shown in the program. A typical violent crime in PTV is an assault that happens on the street between strangers at night. Usually both the suspect and the victim are adult Finnish men. Violence also overrides other topics, especially traffic offenses and white-collar crime.

Although the general trend to overemphasize violent crime found in numerous previous studies on reality-crime programs (Kooistra et al. 1998: 147; Carmody 1998; Cavender and Bond-Maupin 1993; Oliver 1994) is true for PTV, the overall amount is not as drastically distorted as it is in other reality-crime programs. In PTV, violence constitutes "merely" 43 per cent of the overall contents, whereas findings from American and British studies indicate double proportions (Cotter et al. 2008).

The proportion of different types of violence in the program is consistent with previous studies showing homicide and street-violence to be the main topics in crime media (Oliver 1994; Surette 2002). On the other hand, representations of sex crime are not as common in PTV as appears to be the case elsewhere (see for example Greer 2003: 64; Jewkes 2003: 155). Thus, although highlighting untypical crimes, PTV also includes reports on more hidden and rare types of violence, including harassment and ethnic violence.

PTV reflects well the statistical picture of violence perpetrators, portraying 21- to 30-year-olds as the most common suspect group. The portrayals of violence victims (adult men) are also consistent with statistics. However, in contrast to previous research, PTV's portrayals of victims do not adhere to the principle of "worthy" or "ideal" victims (Christie 1986). On the contrary, the proportions of both particularly young and old victims are under-represented in the program. The division of gender in PTV is also consistent with statistics: men are portrayed both as violence perpetrators and as violence victims. Unlike in previous research (Kooistra et al. 1998: 149-150; Dalhqvist 2000), women are under-reported as violence victims in PTV.

Ethnic minorities are heavily under-reported both as violence suspects and as victims in PTV. This finding differs significantly from the results of previous research. In fact, the finding that ethnic minorities (especially blacks) are over-represented in reality crime programs is probably the second common finding in media criminology, right after the notion that violence is highly exaggerated.

The proportion of strangers as violence perpetrators is exaggerated in PTV, as is the amount of street violence. These findings are consistent with other studies on crime media (Cavender et al. 1999; Kafatou-Haeusermann 2007: 355; Hallin 2000). On the other hand, the amount of violence between family members and relatives corresponds to the CS and IVS data rather well. In contrast to previous findings (Reiner 2007), in PTV violence also takes place in private homes and in work environments. These findings are interesting, because they confirm the over-emphasis on "stranger-danger", but also indicate that more hidden types of violence can be and are reported in reality-crime programs.

Conclusion

Violence in PTV is not portrayed in such black-and-white terms as it is in American and British crime media. For example, the common generalization that reality-crime programs concentrate on the most violent and serious crimes, such as murder and rape, perpetrated on the most vulnerable victims, young women, girls and elderly women (Jewkes 2003: 155), is disputed. Neither are violence victims in PTV the "virginal married mothers of small children" as in the US (Cavender et al. 1999), but more likely adult males, just as in the statistics. Moreover, the vulnerable old lady who is appar-

ently a major figure in the Anglo-Saxon media (Leishman and Mason 2003: 13) is not found in PTV.

It has been proposed (Smolej 2010) that one major reason for differences in crime media contents among Anglo-Saxon countries and Finland lies in the varying *cultural contexts*. Particularly vulnerable victims, such as old people or children, are still considered too vulnerable to be utilized in media reports in Finland. Second, crime and criminal policy is not at all a central *political theme*, which probably has more to do with the construction of the political system than with actual crime levels[3]. The emphasis on crime and control in the political agenda appears to be considerable stronger in countries with two-party systems (for example the US and UK) than in countries with multi-party systems, such as Finland. These differences are also reflected in the mass media, as extreme political polarization of the press is still rare in Nordic countries. Third, it is likely that because PTV airs on a *state-owned* TV channel, both the selection of news contents and the ways in which the vignettes are constructed and presented in the program differ significantly from corresponding commercial programs.

PTV makes numerous exceptions to the reality-crime program genre by transmitting a more nuanced picture of violence. Some violence topics, including ethnic violence and harassment, seem to be a speciality of PTV. Moreover, some victim and perpetrator traits, such as age, ethnicity and gender, are not as strongly highlighted or distorted in PTV as they appear to be in its American and British sister-programs. It is also likely that similar findings could be obtained in other Nordic countries, where crime reporting does not take as sensationalistic forms as it does in the UK and US.

Research has shown that there is no single viewing audience but many different audiences that bring their personal experiences to their interpretations of media content (Doyle 2003: 53). Moreover, besides studying media effects on individual audience members, it is perhaps even more important to understand how the media influence other institutions (ibid.; Estrada 1999; Pollack 2001).

The long-lasting concerns over harmful media effects that have led to the predominance of problem-based research (Nabi and Oliver 2009: 2) – particularly in crime media research – are in dire need of re-orientation in the future. It has already been noted in video game studies that such games can be used as a form of relaxation and therapy (Gardner 1991) and act as a means to release pent-up aggression and frustration. There are no reasons to assume that crime media do not offer excitement, a feeling of danger or enable cathartic experiences (Presdee 2000), or have numerous other positive implications both for viewers and readers, and for society as a whole. Such programs can draw attention to certain issues, for instance highlight victims´ rights and even influence government policies. Crime media also play a major role in uncovering and publicizing miscarriages of justice and have positive effects on victims. (Marsh and Melville 2009: 110-2.)

Notes

1. The non-violent crime contents (53%) consist of property crimes, hunting crimes, traffic offenses, arsons and frauds. Missing persons is a permanent topic, as are reports on the functions of the crime controlling system. In addition, a vignette featuring a patrolling police team accompanied by a reporter on their weekend shift is included in every episode.

2. The same percentage, for example, in Sweden was 5.4, in Denmark 5.1 and in the United Kingdom 5.8 (Tilastokeskus, 2009).
3. Finland is a violent country in comparison to other Western states. For example, the homicide rate is one of the highest in the EU (Lehti, 2008).

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V

Constructing ideal victims? Violence narratives in Finnish crime-appeal programming

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Abstract

This article utilizes Nils Christie's classic concept of the ideal victim and examines the ways in which crime-appeal programming contributes to the construction of social narratives of victims of violence. Its special focus is on techniques and victim-specific attributes that are used in the Finnish crime-appeal programme, *Poliisi-TV*, to define victims. The data comprise 21 violence vignettes, which are textually and visually analysed from the perspective of dramaturgy. These narratives represent victims of violence as either survivors or victims. The survivors are portrayed as heroic characters who have found inner strength to carry on with their lives after their victimization, while the victims are presented as depressed and traumatized, and their future is pictured as gloomy and unhopeful. The narratives mediate a strong picture of the hetero-normative nuclear family and the victims of violence represented in the programme are middle-aged, middle-class, financially well-off parents. Victims of violence who are outside the parameters of family, such as marginalized alcoholic men and particularly vulnerable victims, are completely missing from the footage. Some major differences among Finnish and Anglo-American media portrayals are pointed out, and internationally comparative crime media research is called for.

Key words

crime-appeal programming, ideal victim, narrative, text-analysis, violence

INTRODUCTION

Nils Christie's (1986) theory of the ideal victim tackled the paradox between real-life crime victims and imaginary victims. He defined the ideal victim as 'a person or a category of individual who – when hit by crime – most readily [is] given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim' (1986: 18). Christie's ideal victim supposedly consists of the following elements: she or he is weak, carrying out a respectable project when the

CRIME MEDIA **CULTURE** © The Author(s), 2010. Reprints and permissions: http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav, ISSN 1741-6590, Vol 6(1): 69–85 [DOI: 10.1177/1741659010363044]

crime occurs, and can by no means be blamed for being where she or he was when the crime happened. Moreover, the perpetrator should be big and bad and should have no prior personal relationship to the victim. Christie's own example is an old lady on her way home after caring for her sick sister. The lady is then mugged by a big man who later uses the money to buy alcohol or drugs (1986: 19). Apparently, the main characteristics of an ideal victim include being as *vulnerable* as possible, both physically (e.g., old, young, ill, handicapped) and economically. In addition, it is equally important that she or he be identified and evidenced as *innocent* (Walklate, 2007: 28).

The idea of the ideal victim is widely recognized and referred to in criminology. Still, surprisingly little empirical effort has been made to systematically unravel what exactly is meant by ideal victims in media criminology. Moreover, the origins of such ideal types of victims are often explained even more loosely. For example, Gray Cavender and colleagues (1999: 645) have claimed that those most likely to be regarded as ideal victims in cultural constructions and popular discourse are white, young, stereotypically pretty, and virginal or married mothers of small children. However, 'cultural constructions' and 'popular discourse' are left unexplained in their writing and used vaguely in reference to American reality-crime programming. Even Christie (1986) himself didn't define where and how the concept of the ideal victim is generated in our Western societies.

In this article I examine the portrayals of victims of violent crime in the Finnish crime-appeal programme *Poliisi-TV* (Police TV). My aim is to analyse what makes a crime victim ideal for the programme and, on the other hand, what kind of victims are not ideal and are missing from the footage. The objective is to track down techniques and victim-specific attributes that are utilized in constructing portrayals of victims. The ways in which the *PTV* victim of violence is similar or different from other media portrayals are important to an understanding of both the inner logic of media-made criminality and our cultural understanding of victims and crime.

News can be considered as a means of modern society to define and handle moral questions: what is right and what is wrong (Kantola, 1998: 137). Moreover, portrayals of crime and deviance in the media are often seen as essential parts of social control (Ericson et al. 1987) since the media has a central role in defining what is deviant and condemnable. The purpose of representations of deviance is traditionally seen to be that they awake moral anger and show that deviant individuals will be punished for their behaviour. Nevertheless, crime media, and perhaps reality-crime media in particular, can also serve other kinds of needs and even be pleasurably consumed. It can, for example, offer excitement, a feeling of danger or enable cathartic experiences (Presdee, 2000).

It is important to look critically at the narrative qualities of reality-crime programming for several reasons. As Bird and Dardenne (1988: 82) have noted, while news is not fiction it is still merely a *story* about reality, not reality itself. Yet, because of its privileged status as reality and truth, the seductive powers of its narrative forms are more than literary constructions for they give people a scheme for viewing the world and for living their lives. The nature of reality-crime programming as being a mixture of entertainment and fact (Cavender and Fishman, 1998) blurs its contents and potential effects on viewers, and thus makes it an intriguing target of study.

CHANGING PORTRAYALS OF CRIME VICTIMS

The foregrounding of crime victims is one of the most significant qualitative changes in representations of crime and control in the post-war period (Reiner et al., 2000a; 2000b). During the last hundred years victims have moved from having a merely functional role in crime narratives to being in an increasingly focal position, with their suffering constituting the subject position of the story (Reiner et al., 2000a: 118). David Garland (1999: 14) has stated that the crime victim is no longer portrayed as an unfortunate citizen but instead as a character that represents everyone and whose experiences are expected to be general and collective instead of individual and atypical. He also claims that the victim's suffering presented in the media appeals to feelings of fear and anger among the viewing public, strengthens them and generates identification.

Sociologist Pekka Sulkunen (2009: 142–54) links the growing focus on the victim's point of view with a general transformation of power relations in contemporary welfare states. The, at times, harsh techniques used by modern welfare states, such as incarceration of alcoholics in labour camps, had their basis in the notion that the state possessed authority over the 'good life' and through executing its power over marginalized groups ensured it to every citizen. In contemporary societies the power builds instead on normatively neutralized celebration of individual autonomy. This means that the state intervenes in individual lifestyles only when they have adverse consequences on other people, underlining the notion that first and foremost it is the vulnerable and innocent – the victim – who must be protected.

The development of shifting the attention more and more onto the victim can be easily connected with definitions made by media scholars such as infotainment (Brants, 1998), tabloidization (Sparks and Tulloch, 2000) and sensationalism (Grabe et al., 2001). Regarding news contents in particular, all these concepts roughly refer to the notion that news features provoking emotional responses and physiological stimulation among the members of the audience have increased significantly during the last decades.

Contemporary narratives not only invite but actively encourage people to identify and empathize with victims of crime. According to Chris Greer (2004: 113) this is achieved by making news consumers see what the victims are seeing, and feel what the victims are feeling. The audience is seduced into becoming emotionally involved with the narrative, and symbolically joining in with the punishment of the offender, who is portrayed as evil and beyond redemption (ibid.). For example, Wardle's (2007) research on the visual representation of child murderers in newspapers over a 70-year period shows that the focus has shifted from the offender and/or criminal justice representatives to victims and their families. News media acknowledgement of the emotional responses of society seems to have increased as well.

This growing emotionalisation within crime news production has also occurred in Finland. Compared to news reporting in the 1980s, there has been a shift to a more subjective perspective in crime reporting. For example, homicide reporting has become more sentimental and it appeals more and more to the subjective experiences of lay people. Also the consequences of a homicide, such as grief and shock, are stressed to a much larger extent than before (Mäkipää, 2004). Mervi Pantti (2005) has noted that there

appears to be a growing interest in emotion in the Finnish news media as more and more space is devoted to the representations of mourning in the coverage of major disasters or extraordinary deaths. During the last 50 years the media reporting on national tragedies has both constructed and enhanced mourning rituals in Finnish society (Pantti and Sumiala, 2009). These developments have taken place simultaneously with the growing amount of crime-related material both in Finnish tabloids (Kivivuori et al., 2002) and television news (Kemppi and Kivivuori, 2004). It appears that the rise of the mediated victim image is a common trend in Western societies.

DATA

The target of this study, *PTV*, is a weekly airing crime-appeal programme with 30-minute episodes. It has been televised since 1989, and is at the moment the only crime-appeal programme on Finnish television. In international comparison it bares resemblance to the Swedish *Efterlyst* and British *Crimewatch* programmes. Like other crime-appeal programmes, *PTV* also claims to present true stories about crime, criminals and victims. In this, it is a hybrid form of programming resembling aspects of both news and entertainment (Cavender and Fishman, 1998).

The programme's vignettes about violence are usually relatively short news-clips handling assaults in public places and store robberies in which the main objective is to attain eye-witness reports of the incident through showing surveillance footage and/or personal descriptions of the perpetrator. The most common topics in the programme are assaults and homicides, and nearly half of the programme content comprises violent crime. The majority of perpetrators and crime victims are adult males (Smolej, forthcoming).

Altogether 23 episodes of the programme, including 148 vignettes televised in 2005, 2006 and 2008, were digitally saved. Then, all vignettes handling violence were transcribed to text. The main analytic phase was to include all stories that reported some kind of real violence. Only intentional non-fictional criminal violence and attempts at intentional violence were included. Stories about harassment and bullying at school or work were also included. Traffic accidents caused by drunk driving were excluded. After organizing this quantitative basis, I examined how and to what extent these vignettes contained information about the victims of violence. My analytical framework can be described as two-fold: first, to establish an overview through basic quantitative analysis, and second, to take the analysis in a qualitative direction by using strict definitions of the targeted data contents (see also Lindgren, 2008: 97–8).

Since the role of personal interview is vital for the audience to form an idea of the crime victim and his or her personal experiences, violence vignettes without an identifiable victim were excluded from the final analysis.[1] Thus, all vignettes identifying the actual crime victims through interviewing were selected for final analysis. Homicide stories, in which the victim's relatives and/ or friends were interviewed, were also included in the analysis.

This article focuses on the narrative structures and representations as they are deloyed in the *PTV* dramaturgy. Though the very real suffering of the victims is not denied, it is the media representations of victims' experiences and feelings that provide the focus for examination. In many cases the victims have experienced serious interpersonal violence, which has then been utilized, with their permission, by the media. While the data are public, I have chosen to use pseudonyms to protect the victims from any further attention (and to make it easier for non-Finnish readers to identify individual stories). However, since the main purpose is to examine the portrayals objectively, the stories' main details have been left intact.

The final data set comprises 21 violence vignettes, described in Table 1. These vignettes are organized chronologically, in the same order they appeared in on PTV over the sample timeframe. In cases where the victim's age was not clearly stated, an estimate based on visual cues is included in brackets.

ANALYSING NARRATIVES AS DRAMA

The classical construction of a drama includes an undisturbed initial state, followed by a disturbance causing a crisis, a fight, and a conclusion where the disturbance or resistance does not exist anymore (Rosma, 1984: 80). According to Kantola (1998: 122–3) the term dramaturgy does not simply refer to the chronology of events in a story. Moreover, it is a way of relaying the events in a way that enables the reader or viewer to empathize with the story, identify with the characters, and become interested in their fate. Ultimately, the attraction of reality television is that it offers audiences an instant connection with feelings about ordinary people who are either like us or dramatically unlike us (Bennett, 2005: 176).

Overly moralistic or educative drama often amounts to bad drama. If viewers begin to feel that the text is trying to teach them something, the dramatic dimension can disappear as its contents become self-evident and uninteresting. Nevertheless, drama frequently includes an ideological dimension such as a lesson or moral, or shows via the destinies of various people what kind of action leads to failure and/or to success (Kantola, 1998: 138).

I have examined both the narrative and the rhetorical structures of the vignettes. The former can be identified as the technology of order and the latter as the technology of appeal (Silverstone, 1988: 32). In this process, I have combined traditional content analysis with narrative text analysis. Instead of concentrating on particular elements or sections of a single vignette, each of the 21 vignettes analysed in this article has been treated as a unit of analysis. Therefore *narrative text analysis* instead of mere text analysis best describes the methodological approach. The vignettes that comprise the data set have been compared with each other for contents and construction in order to find common traits and constituent parts.

The violence narratives are analysed from the focal point of dramaturgy, and both the visual and textual contents are included in the analysis. The visual (e.g., photos, reenactment, video footage) and vocal (e.g., music) elements have been transcribed within

TABLE 1 Poliisi-TV violence vignettes containing interviews of victims.

Case	*Description*	*Sex*	*Age*	*Year of vignette*	*Time of incident*	*Interviewed people*
1	3 campers killed in 1960. Case re-opened 2005 and fourth (survived) camper charged with homicide.	Both	[15–20]	2005	1960	brother, close relative, witness, persecuted person, defense lawyer
2	Catherine, assaulted at a hot-dog stand after a night out.	F	19	2005	1986	victim, husband, sister
3	Ali, attacked in his pizzeria by a gang of ten people armed with baseball bats.	M	[30–40]	2005	recent	victim, police, culture manager of Kajaani, five locals
4	Tom, a bus driver beaten and robbed by a passenger while at work.	M	[50–55]	2005	2003	victim, sister, child, colleague
5	Laura, assaulted by a stranger offering her a ride home from a bar.	F	[40–50]	2005	recent	victim, sister
6	Ted, assaulted by a drunk driver when helping in a car crash.	M	[45–55]	2005	2003	victim, wife, colleague
7	Harriet, strangled by her boyfriend.	F	18	2005	1999	mother, mother's colleague
8	Alice, bullied and harassed at school by other pupils.	F	[18–25]	2005	not indicated	victim, social worker, police
9	Moira, assaulted and stabbed by her husband.	F	18	2005	1980	victim, brother, child
10	Anonymous girl, assaulted on her way home at night by a strange man.	F	13	2005	recent	victim, police
11	Anonymous woman, raped by a stranger on the street after a night out clubbing.	F	24	2005	recent	victim
12	Tammy, drugged and raped by a strange man while on holiday abroad.	F	[40–50]	2006	2005	victim, police, representative from Ministry for Foreign Affairs
13	Martin, killed by another young man while out with friends.	M	17	2006	2004	father, mother, sister, brother
14	Louise, shot and injured by her boyfriend outside a bar.	F	[20–25]	2006	2001	victim, sister
15	Jason, assaulted and injured by an unknown person in a night club.	M	[25–35]	2006	recent	victim
16	Michael, a crime reporter, assaulted by a prisoner in the middle of an interview.	M	[35–45]	2008	recent	victim, Swedish journalist
17	Henry, bullied and harassed at work.	M	[35–45]	2008	not indicated	victim
18	Layla, harassed by a Muslim neighbor.	F	40	2008	not indicated	victim, worker from an immigrant project, president of Islamic community
19	Simon, a fire fighter whose fire-extinguishing equipment was destroyed by rioters throwing stones.	M	[40–50]	2008	2006	victim
20	Fatima, who had to run away from home and hide since her violent father didn't approve of her boyfriend.	F	[15–25]	2008	not indicated	victim, boyfriend
21	Aaron, kidnapped by his mother and brought to Russia against his father's will.	M	4	2008	recent	father, government lawyer, representative of Finland's Kidnapped Children

the text and are indicated in brackets in the samples that follow in the next section. I have carefully translated the selected samples of the transcribed vignettes from Finnish to English for the purpose of this article. The main objective is to offer concrete examples of the verbal construction and contents of the violence vignettes. Most qualitative traits, such as pauses, hesitations and repetition of single words that are insignificant in transmitting the main information of the sentence, are left out. No additional words are added to the English translations. However, some words cannot be directly translated from Finnish to English. In these cases I have tried my best to attain the closest semantically applicable expression in English. As Temple and Young note (2004: 167), researchers can carry out the translation of data themselves when they see themselves as objective and neutral transmitters of messages.

VIOLENCE NARRATIVES IN *POLIISI-TV*

The violence vignettes analysed here are rather similar in their construction. Every violence narrative examined is a story of conflict and resolution, and the fact that the presented story is based on real events gives the story extra dramatic power (Kantola, 1998: 129). In *PTV* narratives, the conflict is the violent act that is established early and clearly, which is most commonly followed by descriptions of the consequences and recovering strategies of the victims. The violence narratives progress chronologically in four stages. I have named the stages as: *introducing the victim*, *life prior to victimization*, *the sudden crisis and hardships to follow*, and *means of recovery.* In what follows, the stages of the violence narratives are presented and analysed through excerpts from the data.

Introducing the victim

The introduction serves as a means to familiarize the viewer with the victim and his or her family. The viewer learns about the victim's personality traits and witnesses the living conditions of the victim. For example, Ted's wife describes her husband:

> *Well, Ted's characteristically pretty thorough. Likes to do it himself rather than ask others for help. [C6]*

The victim is loved by family members and presented as a generally sympathetic character. Catherine, who was assaulted by a stranger at a hot-dog stand, is portrayed by her sister:

> *We get along really well and Catherine in general probably gets along with people really well. She's kind of… stubborn in a way [laughs]… But otherwise she's open and outgoing. [C2]*

Teenager Martin, who was killed by another young man, is described by his father:

> *Martin was a cheerful character and a helpful boy. And very considerate towards other people… His own friends and… He was a loveable guy in every way. [C13]*

Common features in introductions are that the victim is presented as a sympathetic character with lots of good qualities. In addition to the ones presented above, other traits include adjectives such as social, handy, independent, athletic, happy, empathetic, helpful, considerate and loved.

In some cases the victim image is defined, underlining the victim's sociability or selfless devotion to others. Ironically, the very characteristics that defined the victim as being giving, family-oriented people sometimes contributed to their victimization. This tendency manifested itself, for example, in the stories of Ted [C6] and of Laura [C5]. Ted, a hard-working family man with first-aid training, was victimized because of his will to help a fellow citizen in need. Laura was assaulted after taking a lift home from a bar offered by a strange man. Negative attributes such as naïvety or foolhardiness are missing completely, further enhancing the image of an innocent crime victim.

Life prior to victimization

The victim's life prior to victimization is portrayed as either very idyllic or extremely difficult. Interviews are usually shot in the home premises of the victim and/or their friends. Most of the interviews take place during summer, on a sunny day by a lake or by the sea. For example, Ted is interviewed with his wife in their sunny garden, where a close-up of blooming apple trees, a dog and a pet tortoise resting on the lawn is provided. A text appears on the screen: 'Ted Johnson is a researcher and a father of three.' The camera zooms in to the pet tortoise and to the dog as Ted begins to describe their life:

> *The kids were going to school and the renovation of the house had been finished and Alli was still a relatively young dog. Life was taking its own course around the kids and hobbies [Ted and his wife are putting on running shoes on their porch]. And everything was… like nicely together. [C6]*

There are characters whose life was already burdened with difficulties and hardships before the crime occurred. The viewer is told, for instance, that Tom's [C4] wife had suffered from a serious disease and has apparently died, leaving him a single parent. Tom's family has also suffered from financial difficulties. The story of middle-aged Moira's experiences of domestic violence in her teenage marriage emphasizes the slowly increasing nature of the physical violence by which a story of a long-lasting agony is transmitted.

> *It was nice to be so in love. He was so wonderful. He brought me flowers and it was all very romantic… [Moira standing on a railway station platform. A text appears: 'Moira got married after dating for six months.'] But then it started out with slapping, and then I already got hit with a fist and choked and that kind of stuff… so I was scared [Moira getting on a train]. [C9]*

Just as in Christie's (1986) definition of the elements of an ideal victim in *PTV*, the victim is also carrying out everyday life routines when the violent act suddenly happens. In Tom's case he was at work, driving a bus.

It was a totally normal day at work. Nothing special there… In any way. There were about twenty passengers when I left Helsinki and one by one the people living in Hyrylä got off. [C4]

The sudden crisis and hardships to follow

The violence comes as a complete shock to the victim, whose ordinary state is interrupted by the incident. Middle-aged Laura took a lift home from a bar from a strange man. In the car the man assaulted her.

Suddenly I was hit from behind on the head. And hard, my skull cracked [in black and white footage someone picks up a stone from the ground and gets into a car. Someone is covering his/her head with their hands.] And it, it was a tremendous shock… I couldn't understand what was happening. [C5]

Some victims are able to reflect on the incident from a distance since some time has already passed since the violent act. This is the case, for example, with Ted:

I can remember very clearly this fighting scene but… [Colour footage in which a fist is knocking on a car window. The camera moves back to a close-up of Ted] then apparently some kind of shock reaction took place so I couldn't remember these events properly for a long time. Bit by bit they have then come back to me. [C6]

The instant physical injuries are described as severe and painful. Catherine has had to stay at home for quite a while in order to recover:

Living was [a colour photo of the injured face, the camera zooms closer] difficult with the hand, and my face was totally in pieces and my glasses broken… So I don't have that many memories, because I don't think I was able to do much then. Probably I was just trying to get better [laughs a little]. [C2]

Allie describes how the incident has affected her brother:

The first thing in Tom's mind was that he can't go anywhere since people will think that he has brought this on himself [Tom in the kitchen with his daughter Sarah. Sarah is feeding two cats and Tom is making sandwiches]. He's nowadays a bit scared of people. [C4]

In addition to feelings of anger, some victims are depicted as suffering from constant fear and anxieties. These feelings are especially apparent in cases where the identity of the perpetrator is still a mystery. This is the case, for example, in Laura's assault.

I'm scared. I haven't been alone at all since it happened. I have a German Shepherd here and my sister has also moved in with me because of this. [C5]

Legal proceedings are another source of stress and anxiety, adding to the feelings of victimization and thus constituting an experience of 'secondary victimization' (Walklate, 2007: 74). Mary, the mother of Harriet, an 18-year-old girl killed by her boyfriend, stresses the overwhelming anxiety caused by the court case.

[A newspaper headline 'Strangler's sentence decreased'] I have always thought that when… a person is killed it is… it really is manslaughter or murder… [Mary sitting in a rocking chair at home] and you get sentenced. And then these mitigating circumstances start to appear… So that was totally horrendous. That we have lost a daughter and then they start to search for mitigating circumstances in her death! [C7]

The difficulties are described as having been reflected upon the victim's family and friends, although in some cases the ordeals have had positive side effects. This is evident, for example, in case of Ted, whose children were forced to take more responsibility while their mother was abroad and their father injured due to the assault. The same applies to Catherine, who says that her own experience of being assaulted has resulted in 'never leaving anyone in trouble'.

Means of recovery

The mental support of family and friends is described as being one key element in recovering from the trauma. This is stated clearly in the narratives. Ted describes his healing process:

I've always had a great support network: my family and colleagues. My colleagues have been like a second family to me… And the fact that nonetheless I was able to go to work… Though I probably couldn't always work as efficiently as I should have. [C6]

Mary's colleagues in dental care discussed Harriet's homicide a lot, with help from a psychologist. The working community was very close-knit, as Mary's colleague describes:

Of course we were mourning strongly together… Even so strongly that our supervisor considered the need for a social worker. [C7]

The common feature in most vignettes is that the victims have succeeded in overcoming the trauma. Despite the physical and mental stress, they have eventually managed to rebuild their self-confidence and to restore their previous status as members of their families and communities. The narratives highlight the notion that in addition to family and friends, one major element in survival has been the victims' mental capabilities and persistence in continuing their normal life after victimization. As Catherine comments at the end of her vignette, in which she is standing alone on a seashore looking to the sea:

Eventually, it's been largely up to me. That I have processed the issue several times and… [Catherine is returning home with her husband and dog. Gloomy music starts to play and grows stronger.] Accepted certain things and tried to forget… I have carried on with my life in a better direction. [C2]

Young Louise is depicted as having recovered from the shooting incident through help from family and friends. Currently she's studying abroad. She has had therapy sessions with a psychologist and her sister has also received professional help. Nevertheless, Louise underlines that her survival has ultimately been up to her.

It's good that I've managed to get a grip on myself and even started to exercise a bit. And maybe the fact that when you go abroad and see different kinds of living and… When you manage to get some things to work out there… For example when I managed to find my way to that psychologist there it really cheered me up [Louise and her sister are walking together on a snowy sunny afternoon] so much that I felt physically a lot better. [C14]

Although the means of recovery have been very similar among the victims, not all efforts have resulted in happy endings or in survival from the trauma. For assaulted Laura, fear and anxiety are pictured as still being inevitable emotions in her everyday life. Laura's sister points out:

As long as this man is on the loose there is no sense of safety whatsoever. Or of a good grip on life. [Laura is setting a table in the garden. The PTV hotline number appears on the screen.] [C5]

Laura's case differs from the above vignettes since the perpetrator is still anonymous, on the loose, and the incident is very recent. Henry was bullied and harassed at work so severely that he ended up on sick leave due to burn-out, later got fired without proper grounds and has not recovered from the hardships either. The story is shot at Henry's home, on a grey and rainy day. Although the vignette includes verbal reference to a wife, only Henry himself appears and is interviewed in the vignette. Visual elements include footage of a gloomy room, where Henry is standing alone watching out of the window. A few crows are flying in the yard.

In a way I managed to fool myself in the situation so that I assumed and believed that everything's going to be ok… That tomorrow things will start to get better. [C18]

The case of Moira, who was stabbed by her husband when she was young, can also be considered as a manifestation of an incomplete recovery, since it is underlined throughout the vignette what traumatic and constricting effects the physical injury has had on her life during the last 20 years. She has been so ashamed of the incident that she even lied to her children about the scar on her body. Fatima, a young Muslim woman, who has been living underground for some time because of her violent father, doesn't see her future in a very positive light either.

[Gloomy music is playing. A smoky chimney-stack is shown in the screen.] If I get caught I will not have the energy to run again. That's that then. If I get caught my father will either kill me or I'll kill myself. [Fatima and her boyfriend pictured from behind walking on the street. The gloomy music fades out.] [C21]

Although the objective experience of Henry hasn't included acute physical violence, as is the situation with the other cases presented here, these narratives have one key element in common. Since the crime has not been solved, the crisis is still active and the agony continuing.

PLACING SURVIVORS AND VICTIMS WITHIN FAMILY UNITS

Criminologists working within the feminist movement often prefer to use the term 'survivor' instead of 'victim' in order to capture society's less powerful groups' resistance to their consequent potential victimization (Walklate, 2007: 27). The distinction is based on the notion that since many victims of crime are able to reconstruct their lives emotionally, psychologically and physically after the crime, this should be acknowledged through the use of the word 'survivor' rather than 'victim' (Spalek, 2005: 43). Although in the examined footage the categorization into 'powerful' and 'powerless' groups (Walklate, 2007: 27) might not be so obvious or self-evident, the resolution patterns tend to vary between these two alternative portrayals of victims.

The *PTV survivors* have either overcome or learned to live with all the hardships following the violent victimization. They are portrayed as heroic characters who have found the strength to carry on with their lives. The strength materializes in family and friends, and on personal inner qualities. The second narrative type presents the crime victims as both physically and mentally beaten, often depressed characters, whose lives have been permanently shattered by the horrible crime. In this sense, they are truly portrayed as *victims*. Contrary to the survivors, they continue to struggle with the trauma even at the end of the narrative, and their future prospects are either left open or pictured as gloomy and unhopeful.

Pictures and sounds used to support the words that are spoken are a vitally important part of media emotionality (Uribe and Gunter, 2007: 222). The visual material selected in the violence narratives mediates a strong picture of the hetero-normative nuclear family. The survivors in particular are never portrayed merely as individuals but always as family members and as members of the community. They are portrayed as mothers and fathers, as spouses and as siblings not only by verbally giving them these statuses but also through the interviews of family members and colleagues.

The tendency to emphasize the importance of the nuclear family appears to be similar in *PTV*'s sister-programme, the British *Crimewatch*. In both programmes victims do not exist in isolation, but are in numerous ways grounded within family units (Jermyn, 2003: 183–4). In *PTV* the kitchen serves as an ultimate manifestation of the nuclear family, and food in general is present in most of the studied cases. The victims are, for example, pictured serving apple pie and making sandwiches for their children. Martin's whole family is pictured gathering around a dinner table. The significance of the nuclear family is highlighted so strongly that, as with *Crimewatch* (Jermyn, 2003: 185), it is hard to imagine a *PTV* victim outside the parameters of family: not being a family member is equated with not being a proper crime victim.

Pets are present in one third of the 21 vignettes studied. When examining the settings and environments in which the pets are portrayed, it is evident that they are carefully planted in the narrative. The animals are seldom verbally referred to, but are instead visually present, typically in footage picturing the victim of violence taking the family dog for a walk or feeding and cuddling the pets. The most obvious example of utilizing

house pets for a clearly emotional purpose is the case of young Martin who was killed. In the vignette the father is walking in the graveyard alone with the family dog. In contrast to most other stories, this vignette is shot in winter. The father lights a candle on Martin's gravestone. The dog howls. The vignette ends with a close-up of a stone-carved angel on the gravestone.

Both household pets and food appear to serve as consoling elements in the narratives. They portray basic needs such as love and nutrition wrapped around the ideal portrayal of the nuclear family. These visual cues enforce the notion that even though the experience of victimization has been traumatic and mentally paralysing, one is able to overcome the trauma through family and friends. The strong emotional elements are likely to evoke feelings of compassion, since most of the victims are portrayed mainly as unfortunate people whose victimization was merely a result of bad luck. Moreover, the careful staging of animals in the vignettes underlines the incomprehensible act of crime that cannot be logically explained or reasoned. It is just as hard for the innocent dog of murdered Martin to understand why something so horrible had to happen as it is for Martin's family and for us, the television viewers.

IDEAL AND NON-IDEAL VICTIMS

The obvious question that arises from the observed dichotomy of survivors and victims is: why do these crime victims receive attention in the programme instead of other victims? Following Christie (1986) and Walklate (2007: 76–7), the identification as an 'ideal victim' is connected with vulnerability and innocence. The nearer an individual fits the ideal stereotype the more attention they are likely to receive from victim support workers, the criminal justice process (Walklate, 2007: 77), and from the media. However, the victims in *PTV*, the middle-aged, middle-class, financially well-off mothers and fathers can by no means be considered ideal in the same way as Christie's (1986) definition would propose. For example, the classic, often-quoted character of the vulnerable old lady that nevertheless according to Walklate (2007: 28) still is at the top of the media's victimization hierarchy is completely missing from the footage. In addition, other traditional ideal victims such as 'virginal married mothers' (Cavender et al., 1999) and small children (Wardle, 2007) are not included as victims in the programme either.

One possible explanation is the strong emphasis on nuclear family, which exceeds both vulnerability and innocence as main attributes for a proper crime victim. The victims of *PTV* would perhaps not be given the ultimate status as crime victims in the physical world, but they are particularly ideal for the media since their vulnerability is less obvious. As they represent the backbone of our society – the middle class – it is easy for the viewer to identify with them. They are 'us', not 'them'. Moreover, the latent nature of their vulnerability puts us all at risk (Furedi, 2002), highlighting the randomness and the constantly lurking possibility of criminal victimization. All these factors make these victims particularly convenient and thus ideal for *PTV*.

Journalists do tend to tell the same stories in similar ways; the telling of one story excludes all the other stories that are never told (Bird and Dardenne, 1988: 83). This

applies well to crime reporting, where selecting certain kinds of people as ideal victims excludes the voices of other victims (Rolston, 2007). One major crime victim group not included in the footage is the group of marginalized, alcoholic men who constitute the vast amount of both Finnish homicide victims and perpetrators (Lehti, 2002). Obviously, including interviews with down-and-outs would not make very good drama (Kantola, 1998) and probably would not generate feelings of compassion and assimilation among the audience. Marginalized men are not ideal either since they are not perceived as innocent. On the contrary, it is presumed that victimization is something that is endemic to their lifestyle, thus rendering any claim to victim status highly problematic one (Walklate, 2007: 28).

In addition to down-and-out men, especially vulnerable victim groups such as small children, severely injured or mentally disabled people are non-ideal victims for *PTV* and thus missing from the footage. In fact, this tendency appears to be similar in most Finnish media products and probably partly reflects the strongly shared cultural values regarding victims and the media. An example was witnessed in 2007 in the aftermath of the Jokela school massacre, where nine people were killed. The media was heavily criticized for taking advantage of the still-shocked teenagers and presenting footage of people in agony. All this was considered to be against good media ethics (Hakala, 2009: 48) and a national petition condemning the actions of the media was very quickly gathered. The petition was then presented to Finnish government officials followed by huge media attention and public discussion of the media's responsibility and professional ethics in handling national crises. Thus, it seems that in contemporary Finland any particularly vulnerable victims are (still) considered to be morally too vulnerable to be utilized by the media.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it appears that the definition of ideal victims varies among people, societies and times. It is also likely that popular culture portrayals such as crime fiction are defining victims in a very different way than, for example, the criminal justice system does. Still, the majority of literature on crime media and especially on reality-crime programming refers to studies that have been conducted in the United Kingdom or in the United States. Although this is probably well justified by the amount of criminological research, it results in predominant Anglo-American notions of both society and media portrayals. As the findings of this article suggest, these notions may not always be applicable to the rest of the world even though they are often treated as universal. Thus, a more nuanced understanding of ideal victims that acknowledges these differences should be adopted in media criminology.

PTV's difference in comparison to UK and US formats of crime-appeal programming seems evident. As the vignettes studied in this article indicate, *PTV* features items such as harassment, bullying, domestic violence and honour violence, whereas *Crimewatch* and *America's Most Wanted* emphasize exceptional crimes of violence and 'stranger

danger' (e.g., Oliver and Armstrong, 1994; Cavender and Bond-Maupin, 1993; Hallin, 2000). This suggests that *PTV* has a more nuanced concept of violence than its Anglo-American sister-programmes. It is even possible that the Nordic media images of violence and victims are significantly different from those common in the UK or US. Some research evidence seems to point in this direction (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Dahlquist, 2000).

The tabloidization of the media is not nearly as advanced in Finland as it appears to be in the US and UK (Aslama, 2008). Reasons for this undoubtedly have a lot to do with stricter legislation, but also with the strongly held values regarding the role and responsibility of the media. Moreover, there are notable differences in the organizations of political systems. The emphasis on crime and control in a political agenda appears to be a lot stronger in countries with two-party systems than in countries with multi-party systems, such as Finland (Tonry, 2001). In fact, crime control is never raised as a major political issue in Finnish election campaigns. However, as witnessed in many Western countries, the amount of crime reporting has also been growing significantly in Finland during the last decades (Smolej and Kivivuori, 2008). The possible harmonization of criminal law in the EU (Nuotio, 2005) might also result in unification of the qualitative traits of crime media. This means that in the near future a stronger emphasis on internationally comparative research on both crime media contents and audience responses is needed.

Note

1 The majority of the violence portrayed in the programme is victimless in the sense that the focus is solely on descriptions of the perpetrator, whereas the victim is totally absent from the story.

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